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Legislative Assembly
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First Session, 37th Parliament

Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario

Première session, 37^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Wednesday 20 October 1999

Mercredi 20 octobre 1999

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 20 October 1999

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 20 octobre 1999

The First Session of the 37th Parliament of the province of Ontario opened at 3 pm for the dispatch of business pursuant to a proclamation of Her Honour Hilary M. Weston, Lieutenant Governor of the province.

Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor entered the chamber and took her seat upon the throne.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Government House Leader): I am commanded by Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor to state that she does not see fit to declare the causes of the summoning of the present Legislature of this province until a Speaker of this House shall have been chosen according to law; but tomorrow, at 3 o'clock in the afternoon, Her Honour will declare the causes of the calling of this Legislature.

Her Honour was then pleased to retire.

ELECTION OF SPEAKER

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): Members of the Legislative Assembly, it is my duty to call upon you to elect one of your number to preside over your deliberations as Speaker. Therefore, I ask for nominations for the office of Speaker.

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): I move, seconded by the member for Bruce-Grey, that Mr Carr, member for the electoral district of Oakville, do take the chair of the House as Speaker.

Clerk of the House: I would ask the honourable member for Oakville if he accepts this nomination.

Mr Gary Carr (Oakville): I accept.

Clerk of the House: Are there any further nominations?

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): I move, seconded by Marilyn Mushinski, MPP, Scarborough Centre, that Mr Tilson, member for the electoral district of Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey, do take the chair of the House as Speaker.

Clerk of the House: Does the honourable member accept the nomination?

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey): I do.

Clerk of the House: Are there any further nominations?

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I don't believe there are any further nominations, Clerk.

Clerk of the House: Thank you. There being no further nominations, I declare the nominations closed.

A list of the candidates is now being posted in the voting booths. To receive your ballot, please proceed away from the dais toward the main chamber entrance and make your way behind the benches and around that way to the front of the chamber. Members on the west opposition side, please use the route on that side, and members on the east, please use the route on that side.

When you arrive again at the front of the chamber, you will come upon a table where committee clerks will register you and give you your ballot. Please take your ballot to any of the four voting booths that are now placed on the table and please print as legibly as possible the name of the candidate for whom you wish to vote. Please then move away from the table and allow room for the members behind you to get to the voting booth.

After all the members wishing to vote have done so, the parties' scrutineers and two table clerks will leave the chamber for a private room where the ballots will be counted.

After I receive a message that the count has been done, I will cause the bells to ring for five minutes to advise members that the result is about to be announced. I will then announce either that a Speaker has been elected or that there is a need for a second ballot.

I think voting can now begin.

1530

Clerk of the House: Attention, please. Has everybody who wanted to exercise their right exercised their right? It's time to vote if you haven't voted yet. If everybody has, then we will declare this vote terminated. The ballot box will be removed for the count.

The House recessed from 1531 to 1541.

Clerk of the House: I have caused the bells to ring and an announcement will be made in five minutes.

The House recessed from 1541 to 1546.

Clerk of the House: Would you resume your seats, please.

It is my honour to declare that the member for Oakville, Mr Carr, has been elected as Speaker.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen. I will tell you honestly, the last thing that the nominator said to me was, "Keep it short," as he led me up here.

Interjection.

The Speaker: I'm told I'm supposed to stay on the front step while the mace goes up. I will tell you, my biggest fear was I was going to fall off the step into the Clerk on my first day in office.

I do want to take a quick minute to thank all of the members in the House for their support. I have been elected five times now, and I must say that this is indeed an honour, being elected by my fellow colleagues. I also want to thank my nominator and my seconder for their help and support.

I also want to thank my wife and my brother for their support. My wife is the one who just stood up. When I was first elected — as you all know in this House, it's a busy agenda — I had young children at the time. They've all grown up or are in university, and my wife was always there to help. Thank you very much for that. She also is the one with the finger that looks like ET. In the last election, she actually broke her finger putting in my lawn signs. That's a true story. She has not only been supportive as a spouse and as a mother but also in election campaigns. My brother has actually run three of my election campaigns as well as my nomination, so I am now 5 and 0 in politics. As you know, in my hockey career, I was usually 0 and 5. I also will say that it is indeed an honour and a privilege, and I say in all sincerity that I think a secret ballot is an excellent process.

I've said to all of you that I'm going to have an open-door policy. I've said to you that I'm going to be accessible, because I realize, even though I may be the referee in the House, that I am indeed the servant of the members. I will attempt to rule fairly to the best of my ability and I think the people of Ontario are expecting many things of us around this House.

Good luck to each and every one of you. God bless you, and we look forward to working with you over the next few years.

PARTY STATUS

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: First of all, let me offer to you my personal congratulations and those of our caucus on your ascension as Speaker — I'm sure you'll do us an honourable job — and also extend congratulations to David Tilson for putting his name forward. I think he would have been an equally fine Speaker.

My goal is not to make your life difficult in the first moments that you've assumed the speakership. However, you will know that there is an issue that faces you immediately, Monday, on which there is some question as to what the ruling might be. It of course has major importance to us.

I rise on a point of order for two reasons. One is that standing order 3(f) states in part: "When only two members are nominated and seconded as Speaker, the election shall be conducted as follows..."

"(ii) Once all members wishing to vote have deposited their ballot papers, the votes shall be counted by the Clerks at the Table in the presence of one member of each of the recognized parties in the House."

You will know, Speaker, that indeed we had a representative there, as we should, as one of the recognized parties in the House, and that relates directly to what will

happen on Monday. Also, this is the only opportunity we will have prior to business on Monday, as tomorrow is the throne speech.

Given the complexity of this issue and the amount of research that we have done and that you will have to do between now and Monday, it seemed to us that it would be an advantage to you to hear those arguments, let us put them on the record. Then you can spend the next few days researching for your own decision to be made, rather than take up what could be a few hours on Monday, and we certainly wouldn't want to mar your first full day in the House as Speaker.

With respect, Speaker, for those two reasons I beg leave to be allowed to put forward the arguments that our caucus have with regard to that decision, subject to no agreement being reached tomorrow, of course, which would negate that. However, we don't know what the outcome of that meeting will be, and we really believe it would be to your benefit to have the advantage of what we have to say and to have a few days to reflect on it. So I ask your permission to make that submission, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): With all due respect to the member, I'm wondering — and on a point of order I don't like to ask him how long his point of order would take. I just wonder if there is any indication of — you mentioned the length of time — how long the point of order would be.

Mr Christopherson: It's a few pages long. It's important to cite precedent. This is as much a legal question, in terms of the tradition of this House. I won't take any longer than necessary, and I can assure you it's a very tight brief in terms of the arguments that we have to make.

The Speaker: Just very quickly, when the Speaker stands, that's the time to sit down.

I will say this: The ruling on this issue will be a long one and I will have to reflect on it. Regardless of the point of order, if you make that today, I will not be making a ruling on it today. I don't know if that changes that. On something as important as this, I will be taking time to reflect on it. So regardless of how long it takes, I will not be making a ruling on that today.

Do you have a further point of order?

Mr Christopherson: Mr Speaker, it was my expectation that indeed you wouldn't, because the matter really isn't before you. What we wanted to do was give you time to consider what we have to say. So that doesn't change anything. In fact, that's what we would expect. We look forward to your reviewing the points we have to make here today. I appreciate your giving us the opportunity.

The Speaker: I will hear the point of order from the member. You may proceed.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Government House Leader): Perhaps I could intervene. I'm quite willing —

The Speaker: Is it a point of order?

Hon Mr Sterling: Yes, on this point of order: I think it would be more appropriate perhaps if the three party

House leaders submitted in writing their arguments to you — and we would make those public; that's fine and dandy — if that would be more convenient to you. If you're not going to rule today, there's really no sense that it be put on the public record by a speech today. That would be agreeable to me.

The Speaker: I'm wondering if that would be acceptable to the member.

Mr Christopherson: Your ruling, as I understood it, was that I would be allowed to make the submission, to put it on the record. I wish to do that. I intend to make what I'm saying public. It'll be public by virtue of me saying it. The only purpose in doing it now is that the issue is more complex than people initially believed, and we want to give the Speaker ample time to review it so he's not making an instant decision under pressure, if you will, on Monday. So if I might, Speaker.

The Speaker: I will hear the point of order. Another point of order?

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): Tradition in Canadian legislatures and the Canadian Parliament has it that the definition of recognized parties has been agreed to by the parties themselves. To that effect, the three parties had agreed to a House leaders' meeting tomorrow morning, at which time we were going to review these issues in their entirety. It would be the position of the official opposition that that would be the more appropriate course of action to pursue at this point in time. There's no impasse at this time. There have been no decisions made. It's our desire to have these discussions and they will be taken up in the House at the appropriate time.

The Speaker: I have ruled and I will hear the point of order from the member.

Mr Christopherson: Thank you for the opportunity to make this important submission.

I rise today to address the issue of how our Legislature's standing orders apply to the governance of our current Parliament.

I am not seeking recognition of new definitions, I am not asking you to involve yourself in issues relating to the budgets of caucuses and members and I am not calling on you to be forced into the untenable position of changing our existing House rules unilaterally. I am simply seeking the consistent application of our standing orders from one Parliament to the next.

The proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario have always been governed by a set of standing orders. They were last amended by a motion of this House on August 20, 1997. These standing orders are the rules and regulations that the House has agreed on for the governance of its own proceedings.

Authorities such as Sir Erskine May and Beauchesne have confirmed that standing orders have a continuing effect until changed or repealed. In other words, standing orders have an express duration beyond the end of a particular Parliament. As a result, rules that governed this House prior to the most recent election should continue to govern the House in its current makeup. Any rights

and obligations granted by the standing orders in the 36th Parliament must continue to be in force in the 37th.

It is also true that standing orders have to be read in conjunction with the practice of the House and do not, in and of themselves, form a complete code of procedure. Indeed, many of the gaps in our standing orders have been filled in by precedent and tradition. This is particularly germane to the issue at hand: How do we deal with existing standing orders that refer to recognized parties in the absence of a definition of such parties anywhere else in the standing orders? Indeed, this is the central question we are asking you to consider.

1600

Let me say at the outset that recognition of a political party is not a single act. Different criteria and considerations will apply depending on the particular issue involved or its implications. For example, section 73 of Ontario's Legislative Assembly Act provides that "a party that has a recognized membership of 12 or more persons in the assembly" shall be entitled to certain appropriations for their caucuses. It does not say that a party must have 12 members to be a recognized party, and, further, it clearly assumes that parties with fewer than 12 members are indeed parties. Recognition of parties with fewer than 12 members is thus implicit in the wording of the statute itself.

Similarly, section 87 of the same act mandates that one of the commissioners to the Board of Internal Economy shall be "from the caucus of the party having the third largest membership in the assembly."

Again, no specific number of what constitutes a party is attached to this provision, and yet recognition of the NDP's party status is implicit in the order in council passed just this summer appointing me to the Board of Internal Economy as the representative for my caucus. That order in council was dated July 27, 1999, and it reads in part:

"Whereas subsection 87(1) of the Legislative Assembly Act provides for the composition of a Board of Internal Economy;

"Therefore, the Board of Internal Economy be composed of the following persons."

Then it lists yourself, Speaker; three members from the executive council, from cabinet; and then Doug Galt, MPP, appointed by the caucus of the government; Dominic Agostino, MPP, appointed by the caucus of the official opposition; David Christopherson, MPP, appointed by the caucus of the New Democratic Party.

The only other statute that establishes criteria for recognition of parties in Ontario is the Elections Act. This statute stipulates that an official party is one which, during a general election campaign period, has nominated candidates in at least 50% of the electoral districts in Ontario or which, at any other time, has submitted a petition of at least 10,000 persons who endorse the registration of the party.

The examples cited above thus affirm two crucial points with respect to the issue at hand: First, and most importantly, the current NDP membership in the assem-

bly constitutes a recognized political party under all of the above criteria; and second, no single criterion exists for the recognition of political parties that is universally applicable in all cases.

Put differently, there are no precedents or points of law which dictate that a definition provided in one Ontario statute must apply to our standing orders. Definitions found for specific purposes in the Legislative Assembly Act therefore cannot simply be assumed to apply to interpretations of our rules of procedure. Indeed, just as the House expressed its will in defining recognition of political parties in the two statutes cited above, so it must have the ability, if it so desires, to determine how the term should be defined for purposes of our rules of procedure. In other words, recognition of political parties for the procedures of the House must be determined by the House.

Yet parties are not created or disposed of by the House itself. Instead, they present themselves to the House as parties. Our membership in our respective parties is a matter between ourselves, our fellow caucus colleagues, our extra-parliamentary organizations and ultimately our electors. We can leave our parties or be asked to leave our parties. We can create new parties, merge two parties into one or change the name of our party. The tradition in this Legislature has been for the Speaker to accept the party affiliation that the parties and members have reported to him. All we are asking of you, Speaker, is to accept the party affiliation that we in the New Democratic caucus clearly possess.

With respect, Speaker, to do otherwise would put you in the untenable and indeed unprecedented position of defining unilaterally what constitutes a recognized party in this House.

Let me draw to your attention a ruling made in the federal House when the Speaker there was asked to deal with the status of the New Democratic Party in the House of Commons. In his ruling of September 30, 1963, Speaker Macnaughton pointed out that the status of a party in the House was for the House itself to decide. To quote directly from his ruling:

"It seems to me that having in mind the authorities from Sir Erskine May to Lord Campion, from Bourinot to Beauchesne, from Anson to McGregor Dawson and many others, a situation such as that now facing the House must be resolved by the House itself. It is not one where the Speaker ought by himself to take a position where any group of members might feel that their interests as a group or party have been prejudiced. Nor should the Speaker be put in a position where he must decide, to the advantage of any group or party, matters affecting the character of existence of a party, for this surely would signify that the Speaker has taken what is almost a political decision, a decision where the question involves the rights and privileges of the House itself."

In short, the appropriate will to determine the recognition of a political party in the House must be found not in the Speaker acting alone, but in the House acting as a whole.

In the absence of such an express will, Speakers do of course have the ability, and indeed the obligation, to rely on precedent and tradition to guide their application of a legislature's rules of procedure. As section 1 of our own standing orders makes clear, "The Speaker shall have regard to any applicable usages and precedents of the Legislature and parliamentary tradition."

While it is generally agreed that precedents are not limited to those arising in our own jurisdiction, it is important to note that such precedents are only relevant if they are "applicable."

For the question at hand, no such precedents exist. While other jurisdictions have indeed dealt with questions relating to party status, these precedents are not applicable in Ontario because they are premised on entirely different parliamentary traditions. Allow me to explain.

It is indeed true that Speakers in the federal House have on a number of occasions dealt with the question of how to protect the rights of political parties in their jurisdiction. Of significance here, however, is that each of their rulings took into account the tradition of their jurisdiction.

As both the federal standing orders and academic literature on the House of Commons make clear, the practices of the federal House are premised on what Hugh Thorburn, a recognized expert on the Canadian party system, has called the existence of a "stable, two-and-a-half" party system.

Nowhere, therefore, do the federal standing orders talk about the rights and obligations of a third party as distinct from any other minor party. Only the official opposition enjoys privileges above and beyond those accruing to other opposition parties. A few examples from the federal standing orders serve to prove the point.

With respect to debate on the speech from the throne, standing order 50(2) states, "No member, except the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition, shall speak for more than 20 minutes at any time in the said debate."

On matters relating to time limits on second reading debates, standing order 74 reads, "When second reading of a government bill is being considered, no member except the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition shall speak for more than 40 minutes if that member is the first, second or third speaker."

Similarly, with respect to the budget debate, standing order 84(7) spells out that, "No member, except the Minister of Finance, the member speaking first on behalf of the opposition, the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition, shall speak for more than 20 minutes at a time."

This special recognition afforded to the official opposition is, of course, entirely understandable in a Legislature where the party system has never been stable, and the number of parties has always fluctuated somewhere between two and five. The only tradition that the federal House could recognize under these circumstances is the existence of a government and an official opposition.

1610

That, of course, is not the case in Ontario. Since 1943, the Ontario Legislature has been made up of three political parties. They have always been the Conservative Party, the Liberal Party and the CCF-NDP. While the number of seats held by each party has varied from election to election, their existence in the House has been a constant for over 56 years. Indeed, that same makeup still characterizes our Legislature today.

Like the federal two-and-a-half party system, our unique composition has also been recognized as a tradition both in our standing orders and in academic literature. Graham White, for example, specifically recognizes the uniqueness of our tradition when in his seminal work on our Legislative Assembly he notes: "Ontario possesses Canada's only stable three-party system."

Our standing orders underscore the point.

"59(b)(i) The estimates of the ministries and offices to be considered by the committee shall be selected in two rounds by members of the committee such that...the party forming the official opposition shall choose first, the members of a recognized party having the third largest membership in the House shall choose second and the members of the party forming the government shall choose third."

In addition, standing order 43(a): "In any session, upon proper notice, the official opposition is entitled to not more than three motions of want of confidence in the government; the third party is entitled to not more than two such motions, and any other recognized party to one."

There was a recommendation to the House that was adopted on April 28, 1986, which clearly speaks to the important role the third party plays in our Legislature. Let me remind you of the text of that recommendation:

"In exercising his discretion pursuant to standing order 32(d) to permit supplementary questions, the House recommends that the Speaker permit supplementary questions as follows:

"Official opposition: one question and two supplementary questions;

"Official opposition: one question and two supplementary questions;

"Third party: one question and two supplementary questions;

"Third party: one question and two supplementary questions;

"All other questions: one question and one supplementary question."

What all of these points illustrate is that unlike the federal House, whose two-plus party tradition only accords special rights to its official opposition, our tradition of a three-party system is so entrenched that it has been codified in our standing orders. Here, both the official opposition and the third party merit privileges that would not accrue to any other parties that may be elected to the House.

Further, this distinction between the traditions of our assembly and those of the House of Commons in Ottawa

mitigate against the application of the federal precedents to our jurisdiction on matters relating to the status of third parties. Whereas in Ontario the third party is an integral part of our parliamentary tradition, in Ottawa it is but one of a number of smaller parties that exist beyond the tradition's core of a governing party and an official opposition. It is this multi-party context to which federal precedents restrict themselves.

Finally, let me point to the only Ontario precedent which I believe is relevant in this case. I'm referring to the traditional way in which recognition of parties is mirrored in the seating plans of our assembly. Members of this House are either designated as independents or as members of a particular political party. Indeed, much has been made of this in other jurisdictions. Speaker Jerome's ruling in the federal House on November 6, 1979, clearly suggests an integral link between the recognition of a party and the configuration of its seats in the House. Having earlier declined to give status to a party as a result of a motion in the House, Speaker Jerome later revised his decision. In part, his ruling reads:

"The vote — on the striking committee motion — under no circumstances, can be taken to pass out of existence a political party, nor can it be taken to render as independent members the group which has been recognized as a party and which has in fact been seated together as a political party."

Your office, Speaker, was of course aware of this ruling when it drew up the seating plan for this 37th Parliament. I commend your office. Your staff demonstrated a profound appreciation of the assembly's tradition by clearly identifying our caucus as New Democratic Party members, and it's on all our desks. The seating arrangement clearly points out Progressive Conservative members, Liberal members and New Democratic Party members.

Since your office has de facto made the right decision already, I call upon you now to formally advise this House that the third party, the New Democratic Party, does indeed continue to enjoy the same rights under our standing orders as it did in the last Parliament. No motion of this House instructs you otherwise. With respect, Speaker, our parliamentary tradition demands it, and the voters of our province are trusting you to uphold our parliamentary rights. I thank you for allowing me to make that submission to you.

The Speaker: Are there any further submissions on this matter?

Hon Mr Sterling: Yes, Mr Speaker. I was not aware that this point was going to be raised today, so I come somewhat unprepared, but I would like to say that in general the rules of how this Legislature runs are primarily determined in two documents, and those are our standing orders and the Legislative Assembly Act.

In the standing orders, there is no mention of numbers of members that make up a party. However, in the Legislative Assembly Act, there is reference to 12 MPPs being required to make up a party for purposes of getting

money to run their caucus budgets, to run their leader's office and those kinds of things.

Within the standing orders, which we've had for some period of time, there is no definition of what is or what isn't a party. As the member opposite has pointed out, it's up to the Legislature to make that determination.

I will say that both the leader of my party and the leader of the opposition party have said they are going to recognize or would like to recognize the NDP as a party, so I think the point is somewhat moot.

The real question is, how will they participate in this Legislature? One might make the argument that the standing orders were made primarily on the basis of roughly equal numbers between the various opposition parties. There was always a difference, of course, between the second and the third party in this Legislative Assembly, and sometimes that varied. When in 1985 the Liberal government took over, the Progressive Conservatives actually had 52 seats, the government had 48 and the New Democratic Party had somewhere around 25 members at that time. It was a ratio of two to one.

I go back a long time, and at that time — "Too long," my friend from St Catharines, who has been here as long as I, says — I put forward the argument to the Liberals that I thought we should get twice as many questions as the NDP because we had twice as many members and it was only fair to my backbenchers that we have twice as many. Now the Liberals agree with me, although they didn't at that time.

So the real question is, how will that participation take place? We have decreased the number of MPPs in this Legislature from 130 to 103. The average size of our constituencies has increased by some 28%. We all represent about 28% more people than we did before, if you take the average across this province.

We had 12 legislative committees under the old parliamentary rules. We may have to have fewer parliamentary committees with fewer MPPs, because we have fewer MPPs to man those committees. We have a quorum of 20 members being required in this House when debate takes place. We may have to drop that number of quorum down in order to allow other members to do other kinds of business than sit in this place and listen to the debate of this Legislature.

1620

What I'm saying is that because of a number of changes which have occurred to the membership of this Legislature, going from 130 to 103, the balance between the second and third parties almost being 4 to 1 in ratio and the fact that the third party is no longer recognized to receive an appropriation of resources requires the House leaders to get together and work out all of these arrangements so that this place can run in its intended fashion: to bring forward legislation, to allow an even hand in terms of debate and to allow an even hand in terms of participation by each MPP in this place. That is the process we're going through.

Mr Speaker, you may or may not have to make a ruling, you may or may not have to make a decision on

Monday when we do not have any new standing orders in place, if we cannot agree to that, or we do not have a new Legislative Assembly Act in place. I don't think the world is going to change in the first couple of days if we go under the old sequence of events and carry on.

However, I must say that we all need to be flexible with regard to how we're going to make this place work in the interests of the people of Ontario, and from my point I am trying to reach an agreement between the other House leaders in order to have that take place.

The Speaker: Are there any further submissions on this point of order?

Mr Duncan: The official opposition too is quite prepared to discuss the various changes that need to be made to this place. As I indicated earlier, there is agreement that we'll meet tomorrow and there are a number of standing order changes that have been proposed. There are a number of changes to the Legislative Assembly Act that have been proposed which are necessary in order to give effect to what obviously the New Democratic Party members here in the Legislature would like to see; that is, caucus appropriations.

It is our position, however, Mr Speaker — and we'll have a more full discussion about this at another more appropriate time — that you have an obligation to protect the rights and privileges of individual members. The standing orders of this House, the standing orders of the federal House, the standing orders of every Legislature in this country, the standing orders in Westminster, speak to the question of the rights and privileges of individual members.

If we were to extend the logic of the New Democratic Party, which runs in the face of the history of our own standing orders, it would be to suggest that anyone that has some predetermined number of members ought to participate in the government automatically. The same logic would say that they ought to participate in all aspects, and we clearly know that not to be the case.

Your challenge, sir, is to ensure that the rights and privileges of the members representing the Liberal Party, who have been duly elected by their constituents — and those members who have been duly elected as New Democratic Party members — are respected in proportion to their numbers, as it is your prerogative and your role to ensure that the government members, both backbenchers and those in the front benches, are afforded those same rights and privileges.

By way of example, members' statements — a very simple exercise. If we simply leave the rotation as it is right now, New Democratic Party members will get almost four times as many statements in a year of calendar sittings as a government member or as a member of the official opposition would.

All of these issues have to be taken into account and it's our hope, as the official opposition, that we can find a solution that reflects what the people of Ontario said on June 3. That is what this is about. It's about fairness to all members of the House but, most importantly, it's about

fairness to the people of Ontario who returned this Legislature the way they did.

I look forward to continuing our discussions with the government and with my colleagues in the New Democratic Party. I'm confident that we can find solutions to many of these problems that will ensure that what the people said on June 3 is adequately reflected on the floor of the Legislative Assembly.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-East York): Just briefly on this submission, I rise in support of the position put forward by the House leader of the New Democratic Party. I think it was echoed in the final comments of the government House leader. I did not hear the opposition House leader speak to this.

The essential point of the argument is that until such time as the members of this Legislative Assembly bring forward and, if they choose to, make changes to the standing orders, the standing orders as they were applied

in the previous Legislature and the rights accorded to the government, to the official opposition and to the third party should remain intact. That's the essential position that's being put forward. I think that has been supported directly by two of the speakers, and I hope the Speaker will address himself to that issue, not what the negotiations may produce in the future.

The Speaker: I want to thank the members for their submissions on this matter. I will reserve judgment on that.

Hon Mr Sterling: I move that the House do now adjourn until 3 pm tomorrow, Thursday, October 21, 1999.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House is adjourned until 3 pm tomorrow, Thursday, October 21, 1999.

The House adjourned at 1626.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon / L'hon Hilary M. Weston
 Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Gary Carr
 Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers
 Clerk Assistant / Greffière adjointe: Deborah Deller
 Clerks at the Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman
 Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Agostino, Dominic (L)	Hamilton East / -Est	chief opposition whip / whip en chef de l'opposition
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Waterloo-Wellington	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Baird, Hon / L'hon John R. (PC)	Nepean-Carleton	Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of the Environment / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de l'Environnement
Bartolucci, Rick (L)	Sudbury	deputy opposition House leader / chef parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition
Beaubien, Marcel (PC)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	
Bisson, Gilles (ND)	Timmins-James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	
Bountrogianni, Marie (L)	Hamilton Mountain	
Boyer, Claudette (L)	Ottawa-Vanier	
Bradley, James J. (L)	St Catharines	
Brown, Michael (L)	Algoma-Manitoulin	
Bryant, Michael (L)	St Paul's	
Caplan, David (L)	Don Valley East / -Est	deputy opposition whip / whip adjoint de l'opposition
Carr, Hon / L'hon Gary (PC)	Oakville	Speaker / Président
Christopherson, David (ND)	Hamilton West / -Ouest	New Democratic Party House leader / chef parlementaire du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Natural Resources / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Richesses naturelles
Churley, Marilyn (ND)	Broadview-Greenwood	chief New Democratic Party whip / whip en chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Clark, Brad (PC)	Stoney Creek	assistant deputy government whip / whip adjoint suppléant du gouvernement
Cleary, John C. (L)	Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh	
Clement, Hon / L'hon Tony (PC)	Brampton West-Mississauga / Brampton-Ouest-Mississauga	Minister of the Environment / ministre de l'Environnement
Coburn, Brian (PC)	Carleton-Gloucester	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Colle, Mike (L)	Eglinton-Lawrence	
Conway, Sean G. (L)	Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	
Cordiano, Joseph (L)	York South-Weston / York-Sud-Weston	
Crozier, Bruce (L)	Essex	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Cunningham, Hon / L'hon Dianne (PC)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Curling, Alvin (L)	Scarborough-Rouge River	
DeFaria, Carl (PC)	Mississauga East / -Est	
Di Cocco, Caroline (L)	Sarnia-Lambton	
Dombrowsky, Leona (L)	Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington	
Duncan, Dwight (L)	Windsor-St Clair	opposition House leader / chef parlementaire de l'opposition
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / -Nord	assistant deputy government whip / whip adjoint suppléant du gouvernement
Ecker, Hon / L'hon Janet (PC)	Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge	Minister of Education / ministre de l'Éducation
Elliott, Brenda (PC)	Guelph-Wellington	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation and minister responsible for seniors and women / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre des Affaires civiques, de la Culture et des Loisirs et ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées et à la Condition féminine
Eves, Hon / L'hon Ernie L. (PC)	Parry Sound-Muskoka	Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance / vice-premier ministre, ministre des Finances
Flaherty, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC)	Whitby-Ajax	Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Galt, Doug (PC)	Northumberland	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Gerretsen, John (L)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	
Gilchrist, Hon / L'hon Steve (PC)	Scarborough East / -Est	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Gill, Raminder (PC)	Bramalea-Gore- Malton-Springdale	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Labour / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Travail
Gravelle, Michael (L)	Thunder Bay-Superior North / -Nord	
Guzzo, Garry J. (PC)	Ottawa West-Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest-Nepean	
Hampton, Howard (ND)	Kenora-Rainy River	Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Hardeman, Hon / L'hon Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Harris, Hon / L'hon Michael D. (PC)	Nipissing	Premier and President of the Executive Council / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif
Hastings, John (PC)	Etobicoke North / -Nord	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Transportation / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Transports
Hodgson, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC)	Haliburton-Victoria-Brock	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / président du Conseil de gestion
Hoy, Pat (L)	Chatham-Kent Essex	
Hudak, Hon / L'hon Tim (PC)	Erie-Lincoln	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Jackson, Hon / L'hon Cameron (PC)	Burlington	Minister of Tourism / ministre du Tourisme
Johns, Hon / L'hon Helen (PC)	Huron-Bruce	Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, minister responsible for seniors and women / ministre des Affaires civiques, de la Culture et des Loisirs, ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées et à la Condition féminine
Johnson, Bert (PC)	Perth-Middlesex	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Kells, Morley (PC)	Etobicoke-Lakeshore	
Kennedy, Gerard (L)	Parkdale-High Park	
Klees, Hon / L'hon Frank (PC)	Oak Ridges	
Kormos, Peter (ND)	Niagara Centre / -Centre	
Kwinter, Monte (L)	York Centre / -Centre	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Glengarry-Prescott-Russell	
Lankin, Frances (ND)	Beaches-East York	
Levac, Dave (L)	Brant	
Marchese, Rosario (ND)	Trinity-Spadina	
Marland, Hon / L'hon Margaret (PC)	Mississauga South / -Sud	Minister without Portfolio (Children) / ministre sans portefeuille (Enfance)
Martel, Shelley (ND)	Nickel Belt	
Martin, Tony (ND)	Sault Ste Marie	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	Parliamentary assistant to the Attorney General and minister responsible for native affairs / adjoint parlementaire au procureur général et ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Maves, Bart (PC)	Niagara Falls	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Community and Social Services / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Mazzilli, Frank (PC)	London-Fanshawe	Parliamentary assistant to the Solicitor General / adjoint parlementaire au solliciteur général
McGuinty, Dalton (L)	Ottawa South / -Sud	Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition
McLeod, Lyn (L)	Thunder Bay-Atikokan	
Molinari, Tina R. (PC)	Thornhill	
Munro, Julia (PC)	York North / -Nord	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités assistant deputy government whip / whip adjointe suppléante du gouvernement
Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Bruce-Grey	
Mushinski, Marilyn (PC)	Scarborough Centre / -Centre	
Newman, Dan (PC)	Scarborough Southwest / -Sud-Ouest	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / adjoint parlementaire à la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
O'Toole, John R. (PC)	Durham	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de la Consommation et du Commerce
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Palladini, Hon / L'hon Al (PC)	Vaughan-King-Aurora	Minister of Economic Development and Trade / ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Parsons, Ernie (L)	Prince Edward-Hastings	
Patten, Richard (L)	Ottawa Centre / -Centre	
Peters, Steve (L)	Elgin-Middlesex-London	
Phillips, Gerry (L)	Scarborough-Agincourt	
Pupatello, Sandra (L)	Windsor West / -Ouest	
Ramsay, David (L)	Timiskaming-Cochrane	
Runciman, Hon / L'hon Robert W. (PC)	Leeds-Grenville	Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations / ministre de la Consommation et du Commerce

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Davenport	
Sampson, Hon / L'hon Rob (PC)	Mississauga Centre / -Centre	Minister of Correctional Services / ministre des Services correctionnels
Sergio, Mario (L)	York West / -Ouest	deputy opposition whip / whip adjoint de l'opposition
Skarica, Toni (PC)	Wentworth-Burlington	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Finances
Smitherman, George (L)	Toronto Centre-Rosedale / Toronto-Centre-Rosedale	
Snobelen, Hon / L'hon John (PC)	Mississauga West / -Ouest	Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles
Spina, Joseph (PC)	Brampton Centre / -Centre	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Tourism / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Tourisme
Sterling, Hon / L'hon Norman W. (PC)	Lanark-Carleton	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, government House leader / ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales, leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Stewart, R. Gary (PC)	Peterborough	
Stockwell, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC)	Etobicoke Centre / -Centre	Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail
Tascona, Joseph N. (PC)	Barrie-Simcoe-Brampton	
Tilson, David (PC)	Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey	
Tsubouchi, Hon / L'hon David H. (PC)	Markham	Solicitor General / solliciteur général
Turnbull, Hon / L'hon David (PC)	Don Valley West / -Ouest	Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports
Wetlaufer, Wayne (PC)	Kitchener Centre / -Centre	deputy government whip / whip adjoint du gouvernement
Wilson, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC)	Simcoe-Grey	Minister of Energy, Science and Technology / ministre de l'Énergie, des Sciences et de la Technologie
Witmer, Hon / L'hon Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener-Waterloo	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Wood, Bob (PC)	London West / -Ouest	Parliamentary assistant to the Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / adjoint parlementaire au président du Conseil de gestion
Young, David (PC)	Willowdale	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education / adjoint parlementaire à la ministre de l'Éducation

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Nº 2

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of Ontario

First Session, 37th Parliament

Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario

Première session, 37^e législature

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Journal des débats (Hansard)

Thursday 21 October 1999

Jeudi 21 octobre 1999

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 21 October 1999

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 21 octobre 1999

The House met at 1500.

Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor entered the chamber and took her seat upon the throne.

Hon Hilary M. Weston (Lieutenant Governor):
Pray be seated.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): May it please Your Honour, the Legislative Assembly has elected me as their Speaker, though I am but little able to fulfill the important duties thus assigned to me.

If, in the performance of those duties, I should at any time fall into error, I pray that the fault may be imputed to me and not to the assembly, whose servant I am and who, through me, the better to enable them to discharge their duty to their Queen and country, hereby claim all their undoubted rights and privileges, especially that they may have freedom of speech in their debates, access to your person at all seasonable times and that their proceedings may receive from you the most favourable consideration.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Government House Leader):
Speaker, I am commanded by Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor to declare to you that she freely confides in the duty and attachment of the assembly to Her Majesty's person and government and, not doubting that the proceedings will be conducted with wisdom, temperance and prudence, she grants and upon all occasions will recognize and allow the constitutional privileges.

I am commanded also to assure you that the assembly shall have ready access to Her Honour upon all suitable occasions and that their proceedings, as well as your words and actions, will constantly receive from her the most favourable construction.

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE DISCOURS DU TRÔNE

Hon Hilary M. Weston (Lieutenant Governor):
Members of the Legislative Assembly, invited guests, fellow citizens:

Welcome to the 37th Parliament of the province of Ontario.

The throne speech tradition is a symbol of our parliamentary democracy in which the government is accountable to the people's representatives in Parliament. Members of Parliament represent the ultimate authority before whom the government, through the throne speech, presents in the government's own words its plans and priorities for the years ahead.

During the interval between Parliaments, Ontario has lost two distinguished former members.

Frank Faubert worked hard for the people of Scarborough, as alderman, controller, mayor and an inaugural member of the new Toronto council. From 1987 to 1990, he sat in the Legislature representing Scarborough-Ellesmere. Mr Faubert will be remembered for his role in helping to create North America's largest urban park in the Rouge River Valley.

Ross Hall was MPP for Lincoln between 1975 and 1981. The people of Grimsby fondly remember him as their mayor and regional councillor from 1982 to 1988. Ross Hall was a much-loved community leader who offered his financial acumen to school, hospital and university boards in the Niagara region.

I welcome the new Speaker of this assembly. Though filled with daily challenges, your job will be made easier by the respect of the peers who elected you.

I also welcome the new and returning members of Parliament. Your fellow citizens have placed their trust in you, and I congratulate you on the responsibility you now assume.

Just as Parliament has been renewed, so has the chamber in which members serve the people. In restoring this historic room, care has been taken to enhance its architectural features even as it has been modernized. Like the restoration of this great building, this 37th Parliament also will leave its mark on Ontario history.

At the outset, your government is excited to announce that, this year, average after-tax family income is closing in on its 1989, pre-recession level. While this is tremendous news for Ontario families, your government believes that it is not good enough. There is more to do. Nothing is as important as ensuring that people are working, well off and financially secure.

To keep Ontario moving forward in coming years, the government and members of the Legislature will continue to be busy. An active agenda awaits, as much more work is required to assure a brighter future for the people of this province.

This task is made easier by the fact that Ontario's people face the future with resolve and with confidence. Their spirit of optimism is a fitting start to the year 2000.

1510

Throughout the coming year people will celebrate the new millennium. Plans are already in place for hundreds of millennial celebrations ranging from the Red Lake travelling historical exhibition to 50,000 trees planted by the Grand River Conservation Authority. Each local

celebration reflects both pride in Ontario and confidence in the future.

Early next century, in 2008, Ontario hopes to host the 29th Olympic and 13th Paralympic Games. Your government strongly supports the bid and believes the games—along with the 2001 Canada Summer Games in London—will re-establish Ontario as a leader in sports facilities, coaching programs and athletic performance.

To support this exciting project, it has established the Olympic Sports and Waterfront Development Agency, which will work in partnership with the Ontario Olympics Commissioner, the city of Toronto, the federal government and communities across Ontario. The goal is not only to bring the games to Ontario, but also to revitalize waterfront areas that people will enjoy for years to come.

The miracles of modern medicine help many live well, but some patients' survival depends on the selflessness of others. George Marcello waited years for a donor before his life-saving transplant in 1995. This year he walked across Ontario to increase awareness of organ donation.

In response to Mr Marcello's mission, and on behalf of the people of Ontario, Premier Harris has accepted as a millennium challenge the goal of doubling the organ donation rate by 2005. Your government is developing an organ donor action plan that, through outreach and education, will raise public awareness and improve registration. A new Premier's Advisory Board on Organ Donation, headed by hockey legend Don Cherry, will recommend complementary initiatives.

Nous pouvons tous sauver des vies en remplissant une carte de don d'organes et en informant nos proches de nos intentions, pour qu'ils respectent nos volontés.

We can all save lives by filling out organ donation cards and advising loved ones of our intentions so that they may honour our wishes.

Public office is not the property of any individual or party. It belongs to the people. The men and women who hold office, at all levels, do so only because their fellow citizens have placed in them their trust.

Elections are a reminder that government is only as good as the benefit it provides to real people. After all, government exists to serve people, not the other way around.

Government exists to serve people such as Mrs Gerry Rody, who joins us here today.

Confronting adversity early in life, Mrs Rody raised five children on her own. Times were tough and life wasn't always easy. But to ensure a better future for herself and her children, Mrs Rody continued her education while working, became an accountant, and ultimately earned a university degree. She is very proud that she and, as of today, four children as well as five of her grandchildren have obtained university degrees.

This week, Mrs Rody celebrates her son Talson's retirement, after his own 40-year career as an Ontario land surveyor. After decades of labour and sacrifice, parents take great pride in seeing their children mature,

succeed in life, raise families of their own and approach retirement themselves.

Mrs Rody asked no assistance from government, but worked hard, paid taxes, obeyed the law, raised a fine family and contributed to her. She, and people like her, are real Canadian heroes. They are the strength of this country and this great province.

Yet, all too often, these are people whom governments have failed to hear.

The current government pledges always to remember that it works for the people, not the other way around. It will keep its promises. Its focus remains making life better for hard-working families.

Your government looks to the future and sets the goal of bringing real benefits to real people:

New jobs. Good, secure, well-paying jobs. Jobs in high technology. Jobs in construction. Jobs in companies that have newly invested in Ontario. Jobs allowing welfare recipients to get their lives back on track.

New infrastructure designed to meet the needs of tomorrow's entrepreneurs, students and workers. Modern schools. New roads. Information networks.

Secure and restful places for people to live. More parks. Safer streets. Assistance for those without shelter.

A greater sense of community. Students helping their neighbours. Graduates finding work close to home. Parents playing an active role in their children's education.

New protection for taxpayers. Balanced budgets. More money in people's pockets for them to spend, save or invest as they see fit. The lowest personal income tax rate in the country.

These are the benefits to real people that your government strives to achieve. This is the stronger, growing Ontario that it wants to build.

A strong economy is the foundation of prosperity. It is the key to affording services important to people, including accessible health care and quality education.

Une économie solide est le fondement même de la prospérité. Elle permet d'offrir à la population d'importants services, notamment des soins de santé accessibles et une éducation de qualité.

Ontario's economy is stronger in 1999 than in 1995. New home construction is up. Business investment is up. Consumer spending is up. Job creation is up. The Conference Board of Canada said in May, "Clearly the Ontario economy is presently the strongest among the provinces."

Though the economy is strong, there is much more to do. Families, employers, investors and opinion leaders all say that:

Ontario must keep attracting investment,

Ontario must keep cutting taxes,

Ontario must continue to promote consumer confidence and, above all,

Ontario must become even more competitive.

"Competitiveness" may sound abstract. To real people, it means getting and keeping good jobs, protecting their standard of living and improving the quality

of life. This is why your government will do what it takes to keep Ontario's economy strong.

It will continue to cut taxes. Not only do tax cuts create jobs, but low tax rates are essential to economic competitiveness.

1520

The Ontario government rejects the federal government's argument that taxes should only be cut when the economy is strong. On the contrary, it believes that tax cuts are vital to keep the economy strong. It sees low, competitive tax rates as recession protection, helping to insulate Ontario in the event of an economic downturn. Low taxes also help Ontario keep up with its neighbours.

Your government has already begun to cut residential property taxes. Ultimately it will reduce the provincial portion of residential property taxes by 20%, providing relief to homeowners and renters throughout Ontario.

Prior to the 1999 budget, the government had already reduced by 31.7% the provincial income tax burden on the typical family. Now the government is phasing in a further 20% income tax reduction. And it will continue to cut the small-business corporate tax rate to 4.75%, half its 1997 level.

Your government believes the federal government must do its share to reduce the tax burden. In addition to reducing the federal personal income tax rate, Ottawa must reduce employment insurance payroll taxes to create jobs.

Once taxes are cut, people need assurances taxes will not go up again. Your government will introduce a Taxpayer Protection Act that would prevent governments from hiking taxes or imposing new ones without voter approval.

When the current government first took office, the provincial deficit approached \$11.3 billion. With continuing vigilance that will require additional difficult decisions, in just seven months your government will table a balanced budget for 2000 and 2001, a tremendous way to start the new millennium.

Your government, however, acknowledges that the job of controlling the size and cost of government never ends. To ensure that the budget stays balanced, it will introduce a Balanced Budget Act that would penalize politicians who run deficits.

Despite progress in cutting job-killing red tape, much work remains. Government bureaucracy still imposes, by one estimate, 40,000 official forms. Forty per cent of small business owners say they spend more than six hours per week on government paperwork.

To free individuals and businesses from unnecessary red tape, your government will create a permanent red-tape watchdog. Its expanded mandate will include subjecting all new regulations to a strict business-impact test.

All branches of government must treat people fairly and with respect. To that end, your government will introduce a Declaration of Taxpayer Rights that protects individuals and businesses in all their dealings with government agencies.

Your government will continue to work tirelessly to attract investment, such as the Denso manufacturing plant in Guelph and AstraZeneca's new Mississauga manufacturing facility. These companies join hundreds of investors drawn to Ontario by our lower taxes and business-friendly climate.

In March the Jobs and Investment Board issued A Road Map to Prosperity, which outlined strategic goals to ready all participants in the Ontario economy for the exciting challenges of the 21st century. The Minister of Economic Development and Trade will work with other ministers to establish a public-private sector task group that will recommend the best long-term approach to stay competitive, create future jobs and promote high technology and innovation.

Ontario stands as a world leader in scientific research and development. Still, your government wants you to make better use of the talents of Ontario's scientists and researchers to foster a culture of innovation. It has asked Dr. Heather Munroe-Blum of the University of Toronto to look at innovation-supporting programs from around the world and to recommend ways to expand Ontario's ability to innovate in all sectors of the economy.

Along with an innovation culture, a strong economy requires an infrastructure designed to meet the needs of both today and tomorrow. Indeed, history shows that Ontario prospered when its leaders took concrete steps to prepare for the future.

To renew Ontario's network of hospitals, high-technology links, highways, transit, education institutions and other infrastructure, your government has established a \$20-billion public-private SuperBuild Growth Fund. It will spend that money more wisely, more creatively and more strategically so that Ontario's infrastructure is ready to meet tomorrow's needs.

Nearly six of every 10 Ontario small businesses are already connected to the Internet. Your government wants Ontario at the forefront of this revolutionary technology. It has already endorsed a voluntary electronic commerce code of conduct to set a framework for fair business practices on the Internet. Now it is setting an ambitious goal to ensure that Ontario's consumers and businesses seize the opportunities and enjoy the benefits offered by the Internet.

Your government will save even more taxpayer dollars by continuing to run government more like a business. To make programs more efficient, it has already introduced business planning to the public sector. Through new Ontario government information centres, it will provide one-stop access to information and services. Your government remains open to outsourcing and privatization, and will continue to restructure its organization—always with the aims of improving service, creating efficiency, and putting customers first.

New technology can improve efficiency and prevent fraud. The Premier has appointed the Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet to spearhead the introduction of new "smart card" technology, and given him consolidated responsibility for all efforts in this field.

The warmth of its people and the beauty of its surroundings make Ontario a natural tourist destination. With tourism one of the fastest-growing industries in the world, your government will enhance marketing and tourist infrastructure to draw even more visitors and create even more jobs.

The Ontario government shares drivers' concerns about high gas prices. This is a federal responsibility, and Ontario welcomes Ottawa's commitment to act by September 2000. To help identify an appropriate solution, your government will establish its own full investigative review of gasoline pricing, and share the results with the Canadian government in advance of its own next-year deadline for federal action.

1530

Earlier this year, to encourage the Quebec government to treat Ontario's construction workers and contractors fairly, the Legislature passed the Fairness Is A Two-Way Street Act. While some progress has been made, clearly the playing field is still not level.

Votre gouvernement est déterminé à faire en sorte que les travailleurs et les entrepreneurs de aient un accès égal aux chantiers du Québec.

Your government will continue to take a tough stand to ensure that Ontario workers and contractors receive fair access to Quebec projects.

Your government acknowledges the need to improve and modernize labour relations in the construction industry across the province. It will also introduce legislation to expand workers' right to decide by secret ballot whether they want to continue to be represented by a union.

The government will introduce franchise disclosure legislation to foster an even stronger and more competitive franchise marketplace.

Ontario's agri-food industry contributes \$25 billion annually to the provincial economy, and employs more than 640,000 people. Your government will continue to work to ensure that Ontario's farms and agri-businesses remain strong. It will update food safety standards and inspection programs, and work with farmers to improve rural water quality.

Ontario's farmers work hard to succeed, and deserve fair treatment. Last year, Ontario farmers supplied 23% of Canada's agricultural production, but received only 16% of federal government agriculture safety net expenditures. The provincial government continues to defend Ontario farmers' entitlement to a fair share and urges Ottawa to end discriminatory distribution of federal support money.

This government recognizes the feeling among many residents of northern and rural Ontario that they lose many of their best—their brightest children and their richest resources—to the big cities. In response, it will act to bring more doctors to underserviced areas, to improve and build more highways and other infrastructure through the SuperBuild Growth Fund, to continue to use the northern Ontario heritage fund to support economic growth as well as community and

regional priorities, and to promote tourism in rural and natural heritage areas. It will also introduce legislation that officially recognizes the right to hunt and fish in Ontario.

A strong Ontario must be a cleaner Ontario. Building upon the creation of the largest number of parks and protected areas in Ontario's history, your government has acted decisively to strengthen hazardous waste management rules and to prohibit the transfer of water from the Great Lakes basin. This momentum will continue.

Further partnerships with municipalities and conservation authorities will secure the quantity and quality of inland provincial water sources for current and future generations.

Your government will fortify environmental protection by creating a SWAT enforcement team and introducing legislation that combines the current patchwork of environmental rules into one clear, comprehensive and easily enforced law.

It will introduce legislation that imposes on polluters some of the strictest penalties in the country, including doubled fines and tough jail terms for repeated law-breakers. And it will improve the Drive Clean emission testing program to meet drivers' concerns while still achieving smog reduction targets.

Jerry Weber symbolizes people's dreams of a bright future for themselves and their families. Faced with a struggling new business and an ill son, Mr Weber was forced onto welfare. The next year he entered a welfare self-employment program, took training and learned to write a business plan. After much hard work, Jerry received a start-up loan and now owns a custom furniture business.

Jerry Weber's story is an inspiration. It stands as a reminder that the goal of work for welfare and other welfare reforms is to benefit real people—to get lives back on track.

Thanks to welfare reform and a strong economy, more than 437,000 people like Mr. Weber are bettering their lives and fulfilling their dreams after escaping the trap of welfare dependency.

But there is more to do. Your government believes that even one person who wants to work but is trapped on welfare is one person too many. An independent, comprehensive United Nations report says Canada's 6% poverty rate is second-lowest in the world, but your government believes that even 6% of people living in poverty is 6% too many.

That's why the government is working to help people like Shannon Hunt make the leap from welfare to a brighter future. Teen parents on welfare must return to school to remain eligible for benefits. The new Learning, Earning and Parenting, or LEAP, program offers child care, parenting courses and other supports while they complete their education.

Acknowledging that she would not have been motivated to finish school without these supports, Ms Hunt says she is now glad she did so. Your government wants all communities to offer LEAP supports so that every

teen parent walks through the door to opportunity that a good education unlocks.

Your government knows that people cannot get off welfare and into jobs if they are struggling with the challenge of drug addiction or illiteracy. It will provide mandatory remedial training for able-bodied welfare recipients who need basic instruction in reading or math, and mandatory treatment for welfare recipients addicted to drugs.

Each year the Ontario government spends \$100 million to help people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. However, this is a complex issue that requires the active involvement of municipalities and the federal government. Your government will continue to work co-operatively to address the needs of these vulnerable people.

The desire to ensure opportunities for all members of society also underpins your government's ongoing effort to develop an Ontarians with Disabilities Act. Consultations on this important initiative continue. The goal is to introduce a new action plan this session.

Immigration is vitally important to the country and to Ontario. Generations of new Canadians have contributed greatly to the nation and are responsible for much of its prosperity. Sadly, 17,000 legal immigrants in Ontario are dependent on welfare because of sponsorship default. These are men and women who came seeking a better life but, through no fault of their own, were abandoned by the sponsors who agreed to take responsibility for supporting them once they were here.

Your government believes that federally approved sponsors who agreed to support legal immigrants to this country cannot walk away from their financial commitments and leave taxpayers to foot the bill. Sponsors accepted responsibility and must honour it. Alternatively, the federal government, which sets the sponsorship rules, is liable. The Ontario government will pursue compensation from Ottawa.

1540

Your government is determined to expand work for welfare to all able-bodied recipients. It will take steps to increase its placement targets, open park and road maintenance programs to workfare participants, and tie municipal funding to participation levels.

To ensure fairness for those who play by the rules, the government will introduce a zero-tolerance policy that permanently bans anyone convicted of welfare fraud from collecting welfare again.

Your government knows that people want to work. It understands that further welfare reforms are needed to free good people from dependency. While some may argue that these changes are controversial, your government understands that getting a life back on track is never easy. Encouraged by the successes of Jerry Weber, Shannon Hunt and hundreds of thousands of others, it will continue to move forward.

Making sure that every person in Ontario has access to top-quality health care is your government's most urgent concern.

La première préoccupation de votre gouvernement est d'assurer à tous l'accès à d'excellents soins de santé.

At the same time, it recognizes that a strong economy is essential to a strong health care system, because only a strong economy provides the ability to pay for health care and the priority services that matter most to people.

Between 1995 and 1999, provincial health care funding increased to \$18.9 billion, the highest level in Ontario history. Not only did your government replace the \$2.8 billion that the federal government had cut; it added \$1.5 billion in new funding.

However, the population is aging and the cost of medical care is growing. Your government will increase health care funding by at least an additional 20%, to \$22.7 billion, by 2004. However, money alone is not the answer to creating a better health care system.

Tough decisions have been made, and are still necessary, to build and sustain a modern health care system. With an aging and growing population, the job of preparing health services for the future is not complete. More must be done to ensure that every dollar spent on health care is spent effectively.

People deserve not only increased health funding, but also a guarantee of excellent care. Your government will introduce a Patients' Bill of Rights that protects patients' rights to access health services, to complete information about their health, and to respect for their privacy, personal dignity and safety.

To address the physician shortages too common in towns and villages, your government will offer free tuition to students entering medical school, provided they agree to relocate and practise for five years after graduation in underserved areas.

To build on the hiring of 12,000 new nurses and to support them and their colleagues, your government will increase funding for nurse practitioners and insist on the creation of a Chief Nursing Officer in Ontario's hospitals.

Your government will also introduce changes to laws that stand in the way of families, police and social workers, to ensure people posing a danger to themselves or others get the care they need.

Your government has already kept its promise to guarantee 60 hours of hospital care for new mothers. Most hospitals with obstetric services now offer the 60-hour guarantee; the remaining hospitals are finalizing implementation plans.

Along with the Healthy Babies, Healthy Children program, the guarantee forms part of your government's broader plan to improve health care for young children and families.

The foundation of a better Ontario and a brighter future for our children is an education system that strives for excellence. In addition to learning new concepts and skills, Ontario's young people also must understand the responsibilities of citizenship, and be able to distinguish right from wrong. Your government will continue to improve Ontario's education system by raising standards,

investing in children and promoting principles of respect and responsibility.

Your government believes that, to realize their full potential, children must get off to the best possible start in life. The most important period of development is the three years immediately following birth; that's why it's so important to nurture and support children's development from the moment they are born.

Building on the pioneering work of world-renowned expert Dr Fraser Mustard and child advocate the Honourable Margaret McCain, the government is committed to a bold new initiative that ultimately will extend early development opportunities to every child and parent in Ontario. Recently announced demonstration projects are merely the beginning. Your government is determined to remain the national leader in early childhood development.

As children move to higher levels of learning, your government will continue to help parents gauge their children's progress by testing both schools and students against defined provincial standards. Standardized student tests will be extended to all grades.

With the benefits of school and student testing already clear, your government will move forward with the next logical step—regular testing of Ontario's teachers. The Minister of Education will continue to consult about this initiative.

Any parent whose child has had a difficult year in school knows the difference that a good teacher makes. Ontario has excellent teachers but—in a rapidly changing world—children benefit from teachers with up-to-date skills, training and knowledge. Your government's plan includes regular testing of teachers' knowledge and skills through written and other assessment methods. Remediation will be offered to those who fail assessments, and decertification will result if remediation is unsuccessful.

Parents appreciate the new elementary school report cards that clearly spell out how well each student is performing. Plain language report cards are being extended to secondary schools, starting this year in grade 9.

In keeping with its efforts to channel resources to Ontario's excellent classroom teachers, your government will continue to hold school boards accountable for how funds are allocated at the local level.

Your government continues to support parent councils and direct parental involvement in the school system.

TVOntario was created in 1970 to add value to the education system. Your government will return TVOntario to its educational roots and expand its mandate to facilitate training, retraining and lifelong learning.

This year, a higher percentage of Ontario's young people are enrolled in post-secondary programs than ever before. As more people seek specialized skills and knowledge, your government will work with Ontario's post-secondary institutions to plan for increased demand. The commitment: Every willing and qualified Ontario student will continue to be able to attend college or university.

1550

Your government's programs and policies increased student aid to the highest level in Ontario history. To recognize and support hard-working students further, starting next September it will offer Aiming for the Top scholarships to the top 10,000 students in Ontario who need financial assistance. The private sector will be challenged to match government's \$35-million annual commitment.

At the same time, to be fair to hard-working students who play by the rules, the government will crack down on Ontario student assistance plan fraud.

As the demands on our education system continue to grow, the SuperBuild Growth Fund will provide new and improved infrastructure to meet the needs of students.

Your government believes that students deserve to graduate with the skills and knowledge they need to get jobs. It will expand the number of community college and university courses with direct job links. And it will start measuring and publishing job placement results for graduates of all college and university programs.

Parents, students and teachers want schools to be a safe, secure, and respectful environment for learning. Your government wants the education system to teach students the importance of respect for themselves, respect for others and respect for the responsibilities of citizenship. It has already included mandatory community service in the new high school curriculum, but more must be done to foster principles of tolerance, civility and good citizenship among Ontario's youth.

Students cannot learn and teachers cannot teach when they worry about their safety. To create a more secure school environment, your government will introduce a code of conduct for students that establishes minimum standards of behaviour and consequences for infractions.

People have a right to go about their business, walk through their communities, send their children to school and go to bed at night free from the fear of violence against their person, their families or their property.

Some say that crime is no longer a major problem. Your government disagrees. It hears from far too many Ontario families who lack peace of mind that they are safe in their neighbourhoods. It knows that much more can and must be done to protect people from violence, property damage and other crimes.

Your government stands solidly on the side of victims and solidly behind the men and women who risk their lives to enforce the law.

Barbara Irwin, who joins us today, was widowed when detective Michael Irwin was killed in the line of duty in 1972. She was left to raise four children—three of whom went into policing. Her quiet courage belies the violence that assaulted her family 27 years ago. Her dignity is an inspiration to all.

To support victims such as Mrs Irwin, your government will introduce legislation that permanently establishes the Office for Victims of Crime and gives it a new role in ensuring that the principles of the Victims' Bill of Rights are respected. To honour brave men and women

such as her husband, the government is erecting a permanent memorial to police officers killed while serving others.

Through additional funding and enhanced training, in less than one year the government has helped place 534 new front-line police officers on the streets of Ontario's communities. Its goal is 1,000 new officers by the year 2000.

To protect the right to walk down the street or visit public places without being harassed or intimidated, your government will introduce legislation empowering police to crack down on squeegee people who harass and badger motorists and stop aggressive panhandling. Your government will also develop a comprehensive youth justice strategy to turn young offenders into responsible and accountable law-abiding citizens.

Your government will introduce and urge members to give speedy passage to Christopher's Law. This legislation would create Ontario's first registry of pedophiles, rapists, child molesters and other convicted sex offenders, allowing police to notify communities about the presence of high-risk sex offenders. The proposed law is named in memory of 11-year-old Christopher Stephenson who, in 1988, was abducted and brutally murdered by a pedophile free on federal parole.

Your government will place before the assembly a Parental Responsibility Act that would make parents financially responsible for property damage and other consequences of their children's crimes.

It will also introduce measures that strengthen the ability of municipalities and the province to crack down on establishments where it can be shown that illegal acts—including the use and sale of illegal drugs—habitually occur.

Your government will continue to replace aging jails with more secure facilities. It will expand strict discipline rehabilitation programming for young and adult offenders. And it will ensure that criminals are accountable for their own actions by exploring all reasonable ways to make them contribute to the costs they have imposed on the taxpayer.

The Crime Control Commission will continue to consult with experts in crime prevention and with the public about ways to make our communities safer.

The Ontario government is troubled that the federal government actually appears to be reducing the penalties for some serious indictable offences.

Your government supports the goal of a streamlined court system—but not at any price. Ontario does not support reducing the maximum penalties for serious or violent crimes.

The government of Ontario has worked actively with the people of this province and with other governments to strengthen Canada. To make social programs more effective for Canadians, Ontario, along with the federal government and other provinces, signed a social union framework agreement. In a spirit of co-operation and mutual respect, Ontario will work with other governments to implement and improve this agreement.

Making life better for real people involves working hard today as well as planning for tomorrow. Your government's agenda is large and ambitious, but its breadth reflects the twin demands of meeting current needs and building for the 21st century.

The challenges ahead are daunting, but Ontario is up to the task. People are energized by new feelings of hope and of pride in their province, coupled with the determination to leave a stronger Ontario as the inheritance for future generations.

Though this speech outlines a government agenda, there is no mistaking the philosophy of the men and women who set it. Those elected in 1995 to deliver major change and re-elected in 1999 to continue the revolution do not view themselves as "government." They believe that they are the people who came to fix government, and that the job is only just beginning.

Le présent gouvernement s'est fermement engagé à tenir ses promesses, à travailler pour le peuple, à représenter les contribuables diligents, et à améliorer la situation des familles ontariennes.

This government is unconditionally committed to keeping its promises, working for the people, representing hard-working taxpayers and making Ontario families better off. It continues to remain open to discussion about the best way to achieve these goals.

Members of the Legislative Assembly: Your coming efforts truly will lay the foundation for a new Ontario. May you always remember the interests of those who sent you here, and strive to improve government so that it benefits real people.

God Bless Canada. God Bless Ontario. God Save the Queen.

Her Honour was then pleased to retire.

1600

Prayers.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I beg to inform the House that, to prevent mistakes, I have obtained a copy of Her Honour's speech, which I will now read.

Interjections: Dispense.

The Speaker: Dispense?

Reading dispensed with.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

AN ACT TO PERPETUATE AN ANCIENT PARLIAMENTARY RIGHT LOI VISANT À PERPÉTUER UN ANCIEN DROIT PARLEMENTAIRE

Mr Harris moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 1, An Act to perpetuate an Ancient Parliamentary Right / Projet de loi 1, Loi visant à perpétuer un ancien droit parlementaire.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): Traditionally, the first bill introduced in the Legislature concerns an initiative that has not been mentioned in the speech from the throne. This practice symbolizes the assembly's independence from the crown and reflects the collective rights of members to address the Legislature's own priorities before attending to other business.

An Act to Perpetuate an Ancient Parliamentary Right instills this long-standing custom. Our government upholds this important tradition as a symbol of the rights of all members of the chamber. As we approach the next millennium, I am confident that all members of this House would agree that the Bill 1 tradition is worth upholding, reconfirming the parliamentary custom and the accountability of the government and cabinet to this Legislative Assembly.

MOTIONS

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Government House Leader): Mr Speaker, I move that the speech of Her Honour the

Lieutenant Governor to this House be taken into consideration Monday, October 25, 1999.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I beg to inform the House that Mr McGuinty, member for the electoral district of Ottawa South, is recognized as the leader of Her Majesty's loyal opposition.

MEMBERS' ROLL

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I beg to inform the House that the Clerk has laid upon the table the roll of members elected at the general election in 1999.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Government House Leader): Mr Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn until 1:30 pm Monday.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The House adjourned at 1607.

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 25 October 1999

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 25 octobre 1999

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MOTIONS

PARTY STATUS

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I seek unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding the order of rotations of question period and members' statements for today and the party status of the NDP for the purpose of the standing orders.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

Hon Mr Sterling: I move that, in response to the agreement of the House leaders dated October 22, 1999, the House recommends that the Speaker conduct the proceedings of the House during the 37th Parliament as follows:

Notwithstanding standing order 36(b) and the recommendation of the House adopted on Monday, 28 April 1986, the Speaker should exercise his discretion to permit questions as follows: official opposition, one question and two supplementary questions; official opposition, one question and two supplementary questions; third party, one question and two supplementary questions, followed by a rotation of: third party, one question and one supplementary question; official opposition, one question and one supplementary question; government, one question and one supplementary question, with the third party participating in every other rotation;

And that notwithstanding standing order 31(b) and 31(c) there shall be four members' statements allotted to both the government and the official opposition and one member's statement allotted to the third party;

And that in exercising his discretion with respect to the practice of rotation on debates pursuant to standing order 24, the House recommends that the Speaker adopt the following rotation: government, official opposition, third party, government, official opposition and then repeat the rotation;

And that the New Democratic members shall be considered a "recognized party" for the purposes of any other standing order that refers to the words "recognized party";

And that this motion shall be superseded by the passage of any motion to amend the standing orders which impacts upon any process set out in this motion.

The Speaker: Mr Sterling moves that, in response to the agreement of the House leaders dated October 22, 1999—

Hon Mr Sterling: Dispense.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): In light of the motion that has just been approved unanimously by the House, I would request that you stand down and set aside the point of order that I raised with you last Wednesday, with my thanks again for your indulgence in allowing me to place it.

The Speaker: I thank the member for raising it.

WEARING OF RIBBON

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I am seeking unanimous consent. This is the 43rd anniversary of the Hungarian revolution. I am wearing a ribbon in the colours of red, white and green, which are of course the colours of the Hungarian flag.

I would ask for permission of the House to wear this ribbon in commemoration and celebration of the heroes of that Hungarian uprising and the struggle for freedom.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The member has asked for unanimous consent. Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain): I wish to make the House aware of a situation in Hamilton that I consider deplorable.

When the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board opened its doors to thousands of eager and excited students this September, there were a number of empty desks. The empty desks should have been occupied by students with special needs who require the help of an educational assistant on a part- or full-time basis.

The Hamilton board, and in particular its school administrators, were put in the position of having to tell

up to 22 students and their families that they had to stay at home for fear that lack of appropriate assistance and supervision would risk their health and safety or that of other children.

This is a board that will spend \$33 million this year to support special education programming—\$2 million over the province's allocation—money scraped from other parts of an already stretched budget. This is a board with a rich tradition of servicing the needs of special children, and part of a community which attracts a greater number of special-needs families due to the many specialized children's services located in Hamilton.

Ten days ago the board took the extraordinary step of approving an additional expenditure of half a million dollars, money it doesn't have, to have more educational assistants to meet the most severe needs—to get these children into school, where they should be.

The root of this problem is an inflexible funding formula that this government has forced on boards of education and which is creating unacceptable hardships for the neediest of our students. It must be fixed. It must be fixed for the students in Hamilton and the students across the province. It must be fixed now.

FOSTER FAMILY WEEK

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): I am pleased to inform the House that last week was Foster Family Week. Each year during Foster Family Week we have the opportunity to celebrate the important contributions that foster families make in the lives of children.

Foster families open their hearts and homes to children at a particularly vulnerable point in their lives. They provide the protection, safety and nurturing that children need at times when their own families are unable to care for them.

Ontario's 54 children's aid societies are responsible for recruiting, approving and managing foster homes within their geographical areas. Because of the caring spirit of so many foster families, children's aid societies provide over 5,000 homes for approximately 11,000 foster children across the province each year.

I know that in Waterloo region and in the county of Wellington, which includes my riding of Waterloo-Wellington, there are close to 300 foster homes, providing care for about 450 children. I would like to thank each and every one of those foster families for the extraordinary work they do and the important role they play in the lives and the futures of the children in their care.

I would like to encourage more caring people in this province to consider becoming foster parents and giving to the children of their community in this special way. Being a foster parent is a challenge, and I am sure any foster family would tell you that, but it is also a rewarding and heartwarming experience.

I ask my colleagues to join me today in acknowledging the dedication and efforts of foster families across this province.

1340

SERVICES DE SANTÉ EN FRANÇAIS

Mme Claudette Boyer (Ottawa-Vanier): Je profite de ma première intervention à l'Assemblée législative afin de rappeler au gouvernement qu'il est essentiel que les francophones de cette province aient accès à des services complets de santé en français et de la formation également en français pour les médecins et les professionnels de la santé que seul l'hôpital Montfort, une institution unique en Ontario, peut offrir.

La communauté franco-ontarienne s'est toujours acquittée honorablement de ses devoirs de citoyens, alors que présentement le gouvernement délaissé ses responsabilités envers elle et se cache derrière une commission de restructuration fantôme et derrière les tribunaux.

De quoi le gouvernement a-t-il peur ? A-t-il tellement peur des francophones qu'il préfère que ceux-ci n'aient accès ni à la formation, ni à des services de santé dans leur langue ?

La communauté franco-ontarienne est consternée de l'insensibilité et de l'inaction du gouvernement face à la crise de Montfort dont il est le seul responsable. C'est au gouvernement de redonner aux francophones de l'Ontario les moyens indispensables à leur santé et à leur épanouissement. Je demande donc au gouvernement d'agir en gouvernement responsable.

FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Southwest): Four years ago a Progressive Conservative government was elected by the people of Ontario on the promise of restoring fiscal responsibility to our province.

Many sceptics maintained that cutting taxes and deficit reduction were a concurrent impossibility. During the first four years of this government, a 50% reduction in the provincial income tax rate was implemented, benefiting all hard-working taxpayers. At the same time, government spending was brought under control, eliminating waste and bureaucracy and making government more accountable. These common-sense changes triggered greater confidence in our economy, generating investment and business expansion. We have seen over 571,000 net new jobs created, adding new wealth to our people and to our province. Despite what critics said at the time, the deficit has plummeted. Total elimination of the deficit is clearly within striking distance and on target.

My constituents in Scarborough Southwest have told me that the government is indeed on the right track. However, there is still too much waste in government, the debt needs to come down and clearly taxes are still too high. The Mike Harris government has made strides in restoring financial integrity to Ontario, but the job is far from over.

I eagerly look forward to the next four years, during which the government can build on its successes to date

and continue towards the legacy of making Ontario the best possible place to live, work, play and do business.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): Today, October 25, is the day recognized by the international community as World Mental Health Day. On this day I want to pay tribute to all the wonderful people, especially families, who work to better the lives of those suffering from the devastating effects of mental illness.

One in five persons in Ontario will experience a mental health problem during his or her lifetime. The symptoms of mental illness are often invisible, persistent, episodic and exacerbated by stress.

I am urging the government to take action to immediately amend the Mental Health Act. I introduced legislation three times during the last term to amend the Mental Health Act. Twice my private member's bill was debated, passed, sent to second reading and referred to committee. Twice the government prorogued the bill. If the government really cared about helping the mentally ill and their families, the government could have supported the bill that I had put forward.

During the recent election, the government took the same ideas that I had proposed in my bill and turned them into an election promise. In the speech from the throne likewise, outlining the government's upcoming agenda, I heard a commitment to "introduce changes to laws." I will be monitoring closely to ensure that the government makes good on these commitments.

As the opposition critic for children's issues, I want to point out the appalling state of the availability of children's mental health services in Ontario: 7,000 children are on the waiting list for treatment from a children's mental health centre. If children fail to achieve their potential for health and productivity, we all lose.

I urge all members of this House to do their utmost to assist the mentally ill not just today, World Mental Health Day, but on every single day as we move along.

SPORTS IN DURHAM

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): Mr Speaker, I extend my congratulations to you.

I am pleased to rise in the House today to tell my colleagues about some of the many achievements of the young constituents in my new riding of Durham. This summer, five young people were recognized for excellence in sports.

Sommer West, a resident of Bowmanville, was a member of the Canadian women's softball team. At the Pan American Games, Sommer helped her team to capture a silver medal. Sommer is also a member of the national women's hockey team.

I would also like to recognize Rob Snoek, also from Bowmanville. Rob was in the Paralympics track and field. He won a pair of bronze medals at the Paralympics revival competitions in Germany this summer. Rob also

competed in the 1999 Ontario Games for the Physically Disabled and won a gold medal in the long jump competition, as well as silver in both the 100- and 200-metre runs.

There are three other young athletes in Durham whom I would like to honour today:

Jim Shaw from Newcastle should be commended for his achievements as a shot-put, javelin and discus paralympic athlete. He won three gold medals at the 1999 Ontario Games for the Physically Disabled.

Dustin Reid of Orono and Steve Brinkman of Bowmanville also deserve special recognition for their participation in the national men's volleyball team. The team won a bronze medal at the Pan American Games in Winnipeg.

Sommer, Rob, Dustin, Jim and Steve should all be commended for their hard work and dedication to sport.

POLICE SERVICES

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): Congratulations, Mr Speaker, on your election to the chair.

Media reports indicate that the former Solicitor General advised cash-strapped municipalities to turn to private security firms if their policing dollars couldn't be stretched far enough. How arrogant.

There are very serious concerns from the policing community that private firms are being used in situations that should be done by trained police officers. Ontario Liberals share these concerns and are committed to public safety and public policing. We want the current minister to guarantee all Ontarians that police services will be provided by those trained professionals.

A high-speed chase in Thorold, Ontario, through a town, through stoplights, through stop signs, by a so-called private police force was one example of this situation.

Typical of this government's arrogance, greater Napanee was advised by the former Solicitor General to look into having a private security firm do some of the OPP work when the mayor visited Queen's Park looking for a solution to a financial shortfall.

A tightening of regulations and a commitment from this government is required to ensure that all Ontarians, whether served by the OPP or a municipal police service, receive policing through properly trained police officers.

We cannot afford to go down the road of a two-tier policing system that has been started in other ministries. The policing community needs your commitment today to full publicly supported policing.

STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): Once again I want to rise in this House and praise the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board, who are again challenging and taking on this government on behalf of the children in our community.

It wasn't that long ago that the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board was one of the first school boards to challenge this government's policy of closing schools all across our communities, all across Ontario. They stood up and said, "No, that's not good enough for the children in Hamilton," and they're doing it again.

We have special needs that have been recognized by independent reviewers and by people inside the Ministry of Education, as well as our own board trustees and their staff, that go way beyond the funding that you're providing. In fact, when school opened in September, we had about a dozen kids who couldn't go to school because your funding formula deprived our school board and those children of the special needs they need so they could attend school. Now the board has said, "Look, you owe us \$3.5 million." They don't know whether you're going to pay it, but they have decided to spend half a million dollars up front to put those kids in school.

Our board has the right priorities, Minister and Premier. When is this government going to get its priorities right?

COMMUNITIES IN BLOOM

Mrs Brenda Elliott (Guelph-Wellington): I rise to announce that once again the city of Guelph has been chosen as one of the most beautiful cities in Canada. It has been chosen a 1999 champion in the Community in Bloom competition. Communities from all across Canada were judged based on city beautification initiatives that included residential, commercial, industrial and municipal efforts. Guelph's lovely parks, its urban forestry, riverfront and stunning gardens all helped push the city to the top of the judges' list for the second time in four years.

The judges praised Guelph, noting that it was clean and litter-free. They highlighted the city's arboretum, its conservation of heritage buildings and its wet-dry recycling program that turns much of our city's garbage into compost and, of course, blooms. Guelph scored 901 out of a possible 1,000 points, with compliments to outstanding community participation.

I am very proud of all the efforts put forth by so many to win. I congratulate and thank Guelph's Communities in Bloom chair, Charlie Whittaker, each member of his team and all the other volunteers whose hard work led to this honour. We are appreciative.

Beautiful blooming communities like the city of Guelph are making Ontario a happier and healthier place for all of us here in Ontario to live, work and raise our families.

1350

REPORT, INTEGRITY COMMISSIONER

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I beg to inform the House that on Friday, May 7, 1999, the report of the Integrity Commissioner regarding the Honourable Elizabeth Witmer, Minister of Health, was tabled.

ANNUAL REPORT, INFORMATION AND PRIVACY COMMISSIONER

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I also beg to inform the House that on Wednesday, June 9, 1999, the annual report of the Information and Privacy Commissioner for the period January 1, 1998, to December 31, 1998, was tabled.

ANNUAL REPORT, OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I beg to inform the House that on Wednesday, June 16, 1999, the annual report of the Ombudsman for the period April 1, 1998, to March 31, 1999, was tabled.

PRELIMINARY REPORT, CHIEF ELECTION OFFICER

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I beg to inform the House that on Friday, June 25, 1999, the preliminary report of the Chief Election Officer concerning the late opening of polls and related matters for the Ontario provincial election on Thursday, June 3, 1999, was tabled.

ANNUAL REPORT, OFFICE OF THE INTEGRITY COMMISSIONER

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I beg to inform the House that on Tuesday, October 12, 1999, the annual report of the Integrity Commissioner for the period April 1, 1998, to March 31, 1999, was tabled.

BOARD OF INTERNAL ECONOMY

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I beg to inform the House that I have today laid upon the table a copy of the order in council appointing the following members as commissioners to the Board of Internal Economy:

The Speaker, who will be chair;

The Honourable Norman W. Sterling, appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council from among the members of the executive council;

The Honourable Chris Hodgson, appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council from among the members of the executive council;

The Honourable Frank Klees, appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council from among the members of the executive council;

Doug Galt, MPP, appointed by the caucus of the government;

Dominic Agostino, MPP, appointed by the caucus of the official opposition; and

David Christopherson, MPP, appointed by the caucus of the New Democratic Party.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I would ask all members to join me today in welcoming the first group of legislative pages for the 37th Parliament. They are:

Brennan Ballantyne, from Elgin-Middlesex-London; Tara Bielak, from Mississauga East; Timothy Bryant, from Scarborough-Rouge River; Jonathan Chan, from Sarnia-Lambton; Natalie Desimini, from Etobicoke North; Peter Haight, from London West; Cassondra Hartoon, from Chatham-Kent-Essex; Drew Henry, from Guelph-Wellington; Natalie Hetmanczuk, from Oakville; Paul Huff, from Brant; Colleen Kieffer, from Bruce-Grey; Lachlan McVie, from Mississauga South; Shilan Mistry, from Thornhill; Olivia Murnaghan, from Willowdale; Lydia Parafianowicz, from St Catharines; Katherine Reidel, from Waterloo-Wellington; Abigail Simpson, from Huron-Bruce; Michael Smith, from Parry Sound-Muskoka; Laura Steele, from Perth-Middlesex; and Justin Tisi, from Niagara Centre.

These are the pages for this Parliament.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Also, all members who are eligible for the ballot draw for private members' public business will find on their desk a form that they must return to the table when the House is sitting, or to room 104, no later than October 27, 1999.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

MEDICINE AMENDMENT ACT, 1999

LOI DE 1999 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES MÉDECINS

Mr Kwinter moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 2, An Act to amend the Medicine Act, 1991 /
Projet de loi 2, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1991 sur les
médecins.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Monte Kwinter (York Centre): The bill ensures that physicians who provide non-traditional therapies or alternative forms of medicine are not found guilty of professional misconduct or incompetence unless there is evidence to prove that the therapy poses a greater risk to a patient's health than the traditional or prevailing practice.

TRUTH ABOUT IPPERWASH ACT, 1999

LOI DE 1999 CONCERNANT LA VÉRITÉ SUR IPPERWASH

Mr Phillips moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 3, An Act to provide for a public inquiry to discover the truth about events at Ipperwash Provincial

Park leading to the death of Dudley George / Projet de loi 3, Loi prévoyant une enquête publique pour découvrir la vérité sur les événements qui se sont produits au parc provincial Ipperwash et qui ont conduit au décès de Dudley George.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): The purpose of my bill is to compel the Premier to establish a commission of inquiry to get to the bottom of what really happened at Ipperwash four years ago that led to the death of Dudley George.

The Truth About Ipperwash Act will allow the commission to defer beginning the inquiry, if necessary, to avoid prejudice to any person who is a party to court proceedings concerning matters which may be the subject of the inquiry. The essential purpose of it is to find out what really happened that led to the death of Dudley George four years ago at Ipperwash Provincial Park.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY STATUTE LAW

AMENDMENT ACT, 1999

LOI DE 1999 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI A TRAIT À L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE

Mr Sterling moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 4, An Act respecting the Legislative Assembly and its officers / Projet de loi 4, Loi concernant l'Assemblée législative et ses fonctionnaires.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Government House Leader): This bill contains various amendments to the Legislative Assembly Act which are the result of the recent agreement reached between myself and the House leaders of the opposition caucuses. Among other amendments, the bill will grant the NDP party status for the purposes of the act and will allow our quorum to be adjusted to reflect the fact that this House has been reduced by 27 members. This bill also makes minor amendments to a handful of other statutes governing the committees and officers of this assembly.

1400

AMENDMENTS BECAUSE OF THE SUPREME COURT OF CANADA DECISION IN M. v. H. ACT, 1999

LOI DE 1999 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN RAISON DE LA DÉCISION DE LA COUR SUPRÈME DU CANADA DANS L'ARRÊT M. c. H.

Mr Flaherty moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 5, An Act to amend certain statutes because of the Supreme Court of Canada decision in M. v. H.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Hon Jim Flaherty (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): The government is introducing this bill because the Supreme Court of Canada decision in M and H makes it necessary for the province to amend these statutes to ensure their constitutionality.

The bill responds to the Supreme Court of Canada ruling while preserving the traditional values of the family by protecting the definition of "spouse" in Ontario law.

This government respects the Constitution. That is why we are introducing this legislation.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: One would have thought the government would want to take responsibility for this legislation, do a member's statement and allow the opposition—

The Speaker: Would the member take his seat. I will remind the member that when the Speaker rises, you will take your seat.

That is not a point of order.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The usual practice here when very important legislation is introduced is for the minister to make a statement. Today we are seeing a truly historic bill being introduced. If passed, it will create, for same-sex couples all across Ontario, justice.

I would think that we would have a statement. I am asking for unanimous consent for the minister to stand in his place and to give a statement regarding the historic nature of this bill. I think this is the kind of bill that is so historic that it should be marked by a statement from the minister so that we can all put our positions forward.

The Speaker: That is not a point of order, as you know. The government is not required—

Mr Hampton: Point of order, Speaker: I'm asking for unanimous consent.

Interjections.

The Speaker: There is no unanimous consent.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Once again, on this occasion of the 43rd anniversary of the Hungarian revolution, I would seek unanimous consent for all parties to address the issue of that courageous uprising in October 1956.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? There is no unanimous consent.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Government House Leader): I move that, pursuant to standing order 9(c), the House shall meet from 6:30 pm to 9:30 pm on October 25, 26 and 27, 1999, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): The official opposition would like to offer that if the government is prepared to do an extra question period for each of the House sittings, we would be prepared to support the motion under those circumstances.

The Speaker: That is not a point of order.

APPOINTMENT OF HOUSE OFFICERS

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Government House Leader): I believe we have unanimous consent to move a motion without notice respecting the legislative officers in this House.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

Hon Mr Sterling: I move that Bert Johnson, member for the electoral district of Perth-Middlesex, be appointed Deputy Speaker and Chair of the committee of the whole House; that Mike Brown, member for the electoral district of Algoma-Manitoulin, be appointed First Deputy Chair of the committee of the whole House; and that Tony Martin, member for the electoral district of Sault Ste Marie, be appointed Second Deputy Chair of the committee of the whole House.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Government House Leader): Mr Speaker, I believe again I have unanimous consent to move the following motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Unanimous consent? Agreed.

Hon Mr Sterling: I move that notwithstanding standing order 95(a), the House will not meet to consider private members' public business on Thursday morning, October 28, 1999.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

APPOINTMENT OF OMBUDSMAN

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Government House Leader): Mr Speaker, I believe I have unanimous consent to move the following motion without notice regarding an interim appointment of the Ontario Ombudsman and that the House leader from each caucus shall be permitted to speak on that motion for three minutes.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

Hon Mr Sterling: I move that an humble address be presented to the Lieutenant Governor in Council as follows:

"We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, now assembled, request the appointment of Ms Fiona Crean as Ombudsman of Ontario as provided in section 7 of the Ombudsman Act, RSO 1990, chapter 0.6, to hold the office for three months under the terms and conditions of the said act, commencing November 1, 1999."

The Speaker: Debate on that? Government House leader.

Hon Mr Sterling: Mr Speaker, things were moving along so very well, I thought we would just keep them going.

Ms Fiona Crean is currently the executive director of the office of the Ontario Ombudsman. She has agreed to accept a three-month interim appointment to the position of Ombudsman as the assembly completes its search for a new Ombudsman. Outgoing commissioner Roberta Jamieson has assured me that Ms Crean will do an excellent job keeping the Ombudsman's office running in this interim period.

The new Ombudsman will be selected from among applicants by an all-party committee. This will hopefully be completed before the end of this calendar year.

We wish Ms Crean well in her appointment. We know that she is capable of doing the job and that she will do a good job over the next three months.

I would also like to thank Roberta Jamieson for her 10 years of service as Ontario's Ombudsman and wish her all the best in her future endeavours.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): We too welcome the opportunity to debate in public committee the hiring of a new Ombudsman. We think it's important for a number of reasons. I'd like to remind the House and the public listening about what our current Ombudsman had to say in her last report.

Roberta Jamieson released her report on June 17, 1999. Of course the House wasn't sitting at that time. Let's hear what she had to say:

"We have an ineffective Human Rights Commission which has lost credibility in the public's mind." She accused the commission of being tardy in investigating complaints and of sloppy record-keeping.

Here's one the Attorney General will be interested in, "the continuing failure of the Family Responsibility Office," which collects and distributes court-ordered child support payments. Jamieson received more than 1,500 complaints about that office in the last year. Every member of this Legislature knows how important that case volume has become in our own offices and what a farce the government's whole initiative in that area is.

"Seven-year delays for information from the adoptions disclosure registry." That is an incredible indictment of this government's arrogance, incompetence and managerial inefficiency.

1410

"An average wait of 400 days for cases to be heard at the Workers' Compensation Appeals Tribunal." Members in the House will recall that the WCAT was set

up to give injured workers an independent appeal in a timely process.

What did she have to say about all of these things? She said that Ontario's public service is in a state of crisis, and bureaucrats work in a climate of fear because the government is so bent on downsizing and cost cutting. She expressed the concern that the problem will only get worse in the coming years, and I quote: "In my view, it would not be an overstatement to say that public service administration in Ontario is in a state of crisis."

It is in a state of crisis because this government doesn't take responsibility. It wants to pretend it's not the government. It wants to pretend that somehow it's not here to manage the people's business. We say it is. That kind of arrogance and complacency simply won't do, and we're not going to sit back and wait for the appointment of another Ombudsman to raise these problems of managerial inefficiency and incompetence on the part of this government. It's a shameful record and one that we're going to help correct in the coming years.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): Let me add the compliments of our caucus to Ms Roberta Jamieson in terms of the job she has done on behalf of the people of the province and the members of the Legislature.

In the few moments we have I just want to express our disappointment with the change in direction. At the very first meeting of the House leaders to talk about the issue of any rule changes here, the government House leader asked us if we would consider removing ourselves from the process that's now on the floor of the Legislature and look at something new. That "new" was the idea that each party would put forward one representative and that indeed this committee would not only look at the replacing of the Ombudsman but also at the hiring of the new Environmental Commissioner.

We thought, and I said to the media at the time, that maybe there's some hope here for a different approach by this government in their second mandate because that looked like a good idea. The purpose of it, according to the government House leader, was that they didn't want to do exactly what they're doing today, which is to have to appoint an interim. They wanted to do this quickly.

We facilitated that, and ultimately there was advertising put out that put deadlines on there that we had agreed to. All of that happened because the opposition parties agreed that this was a good idea.

Then, all of a sudden late last week, we were notified that that's gone: "We're not doing that. Even though the advertising is out there and we appreciate all the work you did to try to hurry this along and meet with your caucus and talk to your critics and do all the things the opposition has to do before they come to agreement with the government, nonetheless we're going to change it. We're going to do what we told you we didn't want to do in the beginning."

I just wanted to put on the record on behalf of our caucus our extreme disappointment, that we've gone from the idea of one member of each party trying to

expedite a process that's in the interests of all the people of Ontario to a process that is going to slow things down, but which, more important, puts every decision of this process in the hands of the government by virtue of their majority control on the committee this is going to.

That is a world of difference from the original concept, which was all the members of this House, through our representatives, sitting down as the committee to see if we could agree, each having equal weight on that committee. It is a shame that for a government which says they want to do things differently, the first real evidence we have is that it's the same old Tories, the same old way—

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

QUESTION PERIOD

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Just before we begin the process of oral question period, I beg the indulgence of the House to allow me to indicate how I intend to proceed in question period.

In order to ensure an equitable question period, and one which will permit a maximum number of participants, I will be looking for concise questions and concise answers, and in doing so, I am going to allow approximately one minute for each of the questions. At approximately 50 seconds, I will yell "Question" or "Answer" and you'll have 10 seconds, at which time I will rise and the question will be put. I am hopeful this will ensure that more members get questions on.

ORAL QUESTIONS

RESIGNATION OF MINISTER

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My first question is for the Premier. For close to four painfully long weeks, you allowed your minister Steven Gilchrist to swing in the wind, and because you refused to accept your responsibility as the ultimate arbiter of your government's standards, this Saturday past Steven Gilchrist cut himself down. You tell us today, why did you allow this to go on for nearly four weeks? Why did you wait four weeks before your minister did the right thing and stepped aside?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): Mr Speaker, first of all, let me offer my congratulations to you. I don't know if this counts in my minute of response. I didn't hear on response. Do we have five minutes to respond?

We wish you well in your deliberations. I personally, and our caucus, pledge our support to you in your endeavour to run this House efficiently.

I also want to congratulate the leader of Her Majesty's official opposition. It will not surprise you that in doing

so, I am pleased that he's where he is, but I do offer my congratulations there.

Let me say, in response to the question, I think it's a matter of public record that there was a phone call that came in by way of voice mail to my office. It was a matter my staff treated seriously. It has been unsubstantiated to date. I indicated very clearly that until there was substantiation, I did not feel it was my place to seek the resignation of the minister, temporary or otherwise, nor did he feel that he should proffer it.

Clearly this weekend—the investigation into verifying the allegation is going to take considerably longer, and he felt that it was an appropriate thing to do and I reluctantly accepted.

Mr McGuinty: I am not trying to get at what Steven Gilchrist happened to have felt on Saturday. You put out a release responding to his resignation and it reads in part as follows:

"I believe that no minister should have to step down until such time as there is something more than an unsubstantiated complaint against him or her. However, I respect and understand Mr Gilchrist's personal position on this matter."

I want to know today about your personal position on this matter. Do you think it is appropriate for a minister in these circumstances to have stayed on? Do you think it's appropriate for a minister against whom a very serious allegation has been made of influence-peddling to stay on as a minister of the crown? I want to know about your standards. We already know about Gilchrist's—he resigned. What are your standards?

1420

Hon Mr Harris: Maybe the Leader of the Opposition, in the confines of this Legislature, knows more than I do. Nothing has been substantiated in the way of any allegation. That's why my staff took, and I concur, the appropriate step to refer the matter to the Attorney General, who referred the matter to the OPP to determine if in fact an allegation of the nature the member speaks of was made. Perhaps you know more than I do, in which case you should tell us all.

Mr McGuinty: Isn't that what you're telling us now, that there was no need whatsoever for Steve Gilchrist to come forward Saturday last and tender his resignation? That's effectively what you're telling us. It was with tremendous regret that you accepted the resignation. But if we are to apply your standards to these circumstances, there was no need for your minister to step down. Would you please stand up now and confirm that from your perspective as Premier, there was no need whatsoever for Steve Gilchrist to step aside.

Hon Mr Harris: I've been very clear that the allegation, if true and if made and if substantiated, is a very serious one, and I indicated that if I received any information to that effect I would ask for the minister's resignation pending a resolution. I think that's the appropriate step to take, and that's the step I took.

Mr McGuinty: Premier, I've got to hand it to you. Normally, it takes a long time and a considerable amount

of energy and resources to develop the impression of arrogance, but you have done that in very, very short order. You hung on to this minister for four weeks. You kept him swinging in the wind. In the end, he had to cut himself down because you wouldn't accept your responsibility and do the right thing.

Now, this is the seventh question period this year. We're only going to sit for eight days before you put us all on another week-long vacation. You talked about accountability in your throne speech. Stand up, Premier, and justify to the people of Ontario today your decision to allow us to sit for so few days during this year.

Hon Mr Harris: I am surprised that the member would think that Remembrance Day and honouring those veterans and those war dead who saved this country—ensuring that all members have an opportunity to be in their constituencies and pay those respects; that is the timing of that week. There has not been brought to my attention, until under the lights and the cameras of question period, any suggestion from you or your House leader or any member of your caucus that we ought to alter that week. That, perhaps, is the height of arrogance: when one says one thing in private and another in public for the cameras.

Mr McGuinty: We asked you, Premier. You will recall that we asked you as early as July and August that this House resume sitting. You chose to delay the return of this House.

Let's further flesh out this arrogance here, and let's talk specifically about Al McLean, former Speaker of this House; a man who left this House under a big, black cloud; a man for whom the taxpayers of this province, under your direction, paid \$400,000 in connection with a lawsuit filed against him. What you did then, Premier—a man who was sent away to an ignominious retirement—you resurrected Al McLean. You put him on the public payroll. Stand up today, Premier, and justify to the taxpayers of Ontario your resurrecting Al McLean and putting him back on the public payroll.

Hon Mr Harris: I think the member is aware that Mr McLean voluntarily retired from politics after many, many years of long service both in municipal politics as a warden and here, returned time after time by his constituents, and earned the respect of those constituents to the extent that the NDP candidate in the last election said this: "It's probably appropriate for his years of experience. He served the community well in all those years," obviously very supportive of the appointment, as I assume she was of Bernard Grandmaitre, of Bob Rae, of Floyd Laughren, of Julie Davis, of David Cooke, of all those appointments we have made to bring their experience back to the benefit of government.

Mr McGuinty: I will keep going with this, Premier. Let's get this on the record here so that the public truly understands how busily you've been working during the past several months when this House has not been sitting.

You increased the size of your cabinet—and remember, we've dropped from 130 to 103 seats in this Legislature; you doubled the size of your office; you

authorized pay hikes for your political staff to the tune of 30%; you tell Ontarians they've got to tighten their belts—but apparently there's all kinds of room to loosen yours; you hang on to Steve Gilchrist for four weeks and leave him swinging in the wind; and you appoint Al McLean to the public payroll. If that doesn't add up to arrogance writ large, I'm not sure what does, Premier. Stand up right now and once again justify to Ontarians all of those actions you have taken to date which have nothing to do with the greater public interest and everything to do with the interests of Mike Harris.

Hon Mr Harris: I think you and the public would know that the cabinet, the office staff and the political staff are far less than under previous administrations, before we took office. Secondly, I think the member is very much aware of the importance we attach to the portfolios, and I would invite the member to stand up and say what area of Ontario the member thinks is not so important as to have a cabinet minister or a ministry. This is the member, as I recall, when he's campaigning, who promises all kinds of ministries and all kinds of ministers.

I would say, though, that the member is right: There is a difference between the Liberals and ourselves. I can tell you that the difference is translated into policies: One hikes taxes 32 times, another cuts them 99 times; one increases welfare rates and the number of people in dependency and the other reduces it; one says one thing one time and another thing another time. That, to me, is the height of arrogance: to campaign on one—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Question, leader of the third party.

ONTARIO DISABILITY SUPPORT PROGRAM

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): Congratulations, Speaker.

It will come as no surprise to you that I have a question for the Premier. It concerns the sorry state of the Ontario disability support program that your government has created: such chaos that when disabled people try to call the disability office, they can't get through—after they've called repeatedly and finally do get through, they find that their file has been lost or misplaced; such a sorry state that you're now cutting the transportation allowance for these people, 3,000 of the poorest, the most vulnerable, the most isolated people in the province. You're taking their transportation allowance away from them even when a physician says the transportation allowance is essential.

The Ontario disability office is telling 3,000 of the poorest, most vulnerable, most isolated disabled people in this province that they don't matter. Their file doesn't matter. Their transportation to a clinic doesn't matter. Premier, why is your government beating up on 3,000 of the poorest, most vulnerable people in the province?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): Let me also congratulate the member on his re-election and on his

significant, important status as leader of the third recognized party within this Legislature.

The member raises an issue about the ODSP, the Ontario program that we set up. I think the member for Beaches-East York indicated that taking these recipients off the welfare rolls and giving them their own status was a tremendously good thing that we had finally done and finally recognized, and I want to make sure that gets on the record as well.

What we have done is significantly increase the number of people eligible for transportation, because there was a hodgepodge across the province. We inherited a program where there was more service in some municipalities than in others. Now many municipalities across the province will have a dramatic increase in service.

1430

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Supplementary.

Ms Frances Larkin (Beaches-East York): I said at the time that the devil would be in the details and in the implementation. I'm here to tell you, as someone who stood and said it could be a good idea, that the ODSP office is under-resourced and understaffed, and that disabled people are being denied the dignity you promised them.

Jody Buckingham is a 26-year-old man living with spina bifida. He is a recipient of ODSP. Since May, he's been having problems getting both his entitled and much-needed support for ostomy and catheter supplies. The letter from his doctor, that was required, went to the office in May. You have changed office procedures, you have changed legislation, you have reorganized the staff. Calls have gone unanswered, faxes have been lost and Jody has been dropped through the cracks of your system.

He requires catheters, but because of the way your office has messed up his file and his support, he can't get them and he has to reuse them. As a result of that, he has been hospitalized twice for infections.

That is a problem of your system. What are you going to do to fix it?

Hon Mr Harris: For the record, I think all members will want to know that when we took office in 1995, disabled people were sometimes forced to wait two years to get a cheque under family benefits assistance. We have substantially speeded that up.

I think the member would want to know and would want the public to know that not only have we increased the number of people eligible; we have increased the amount of money since we took office, in spite of the massive deficit we inherited.

Before the province took over administration of the program—it was something we took over to coordinate—only the disabled in the larger southern cities had any of these generous supports. Smaller towns like Sudbury, Thunder Bay and Sault Ste Marie had no supports. That's why we substantially increased the amount of money, why we have broadened the program, and why we now pay for all medically necessary transportation.

The Speaker: Final supplementary.

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): Premier, you should rename the ODSP the Family Responsibility Office II, because it's just as disorganized and just as chaotic as your FRO.

Mr Stead from our constituency applied to the adjudication unit for benefits in mid-May. His pending file from Sudbury was never referred to Toronto. He should have received ODSP benefits automatically because he was on CPP. It wasn't until our office brought that to the attention of your government that he received benefits last week.

Denis Rodrigue applied for benefits in mid-May. Nothing happened. He reapplied in September. He has been told it will be many more weeks before a decision is made. The unit is now dealing with cases from mid-July.

Mr Vantha Chik applied for benefits in March. He was approved in August. He will not get disability benefits until November, because the adjudication unit took two months to provide an approval code to the Sudbury office so they could cut a cheque for him.

Premier, I am telling you that our offices are being flooded with cases from the disabled who cannot get onto the ODSP. What are you going to do to make sure the disabled in this province get some justice?

Hon Mr Harris: Let me say that as unacceptable as two months is, it's 10 times better than the response rate when your party was in power. But I agree with you: It still is not good enough.

You will know that the first response is handled by the municipalities, but we have put in place a 1-800 number so that if there are any concerns we can intervene and try to speed up the process.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I should clear up right at the beginning that when I cannot hear a question, I will have to rise and call order. Obviously there are going to be some situations when there are circumstances. But it is difficult to hear, and when I am not able to hear I will have to rise and call order.

Sorry to interrupt. Premier.

Hon Mr Harris: Is the system perfect? No. No system is ever perfect, but we do have a far better system in place to deal with any who may fall through the cracks or if there are delays. If you have any of these individual concerns, if you would bring them to my attention or the minister's attention, we'd be happy to look into them.

RESIGNATION OF MINISTER

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My next question is also for the Premier. Premier, let me say that you showed terrible judgment in your handling of the Steve Gilchrist matter. It is incredible that a minister could be under investigation by the Ontario Provincial Police and still is allowed to be a member of your cabinet. But the problem doesn't end there, because in appointing Mr Clement to be the Acting Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, you've created another

conflict. One of the jobs of the Minister of the Environment is to keep an eye on what Municipal Affairs is doing in terms of environmentally sensitive areas. Don't you understand that in putting the Minister of the Environment into a position where he's now wearing two hats, two contradictory hats, you've created the circumstances for another conflict of interest?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I think the leader of the New Democratic Party would know that the established practice his government had was that one of the alternatives for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing was the Minister of the Environment. He thought that would be good enough when he was in government, and so do we.

Mr Hampton: Premier, you've already got an example today of the conflict. As you know, there is a controversial development proposal to put 2,500 housing units on the Oak Ridges moraine in Uxbridge, despite the Uxbridge council's unanimous opposition. What did Tony Clement, your Minister of the Environment, do—the minister who is supposed to be protecting the environment? He wrote to the council and he said, "You know, you can always change the environmental assessment." That's his idea, I guess, of protecting the environment.

Here you have the Ministry of Municipal Affairs that is prepared now, as this whole matter goes to the Ontario Municipal Board — the minister, Tony Clement, is going to be in charge of this. On the one hand he's supposed to be protecting the environment; on the other hand he's supposed to be looking after development. Premier, you've created another conflict of interest. Doesn't this matter to your government? Is that the real issue, that these matters really don't concern your government?

Hon Mr Harris: Actually, the file and the matter will be determined by the Ontario Municipal Board, not by the minister.

SENIORS' HEALTH SERVICES

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): My question is for the Minister of Health. Minister, the Toronto Star on Saturday told the story of an 81-year-old man who was allegedly abused while living in a retirement home. Complaints about the care being provided in this home were brought to your ministry's attention in February 1998, but nothing was done. No action was taken until police stepped in to investigate evidence of physical abuse.

Minister, this was an 81-year-old man who needed care, the same kind of care that your ministry would have provided if he had been in his own home, the same kind of care that he would have received if he had been in a nursing home. Why are you not prepared to take responsibility for the care of people who live in retirement homes?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Mr Speaker, I'm going to refer that to the minister with responsibility for seniors.

Hon Helen Johns (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, minister responsible for seniors and women): With respect to seniors, let me tell you that the number one priority of this government is the safety of our seniors in this province. Let me say that the government has done a number of things to guarantee safety for its seniors. In fact, since I've been minister with responsibility for seniors, we've entered into an elder abuse round table, where we have the co-chair, Dr Elizabeth Podnieks, working with me to talk about things we can do to ensure that seniors in our province are safe. We've also entered into an Alzheimer's strategy, where we talk about safety for people with Alzheimer's. We've met with ORCA, which is the residential care association, to talk about self-regulation and a framework, and we've also worked with the municipalities to help them enforce bylaws within their communities.

I might say the premise of the question I would disagree with, because the safety of our seniors in this province is a very important priority for this government.

1440

Mrs McLeod: My question was about access to health care for an 81-year-old man who needed health care. With all due respect to the minister for seniors, she cannot provide the health care that this man needed. That's why the question was to the Minister of Health. This is a huge gap in the health care system. It is not just about housing. This is about the need for health care. There is a real person here.

Let me give you another story, Minister. Last Monday, a 105-year-old woman was sent to a hospital in London from a retirement home that said she needed more care than they could provide. The hospital tried to discharge her back to the home; the home would not take her back. She is 105 years old. She was evicted from what had been her home for 12 years. She had no place to go.

My question, truly, is still for the Minister of Health. A 105-year-old woman needing health care: Why is her need for health care not the responsibility of this government, this government's Minister of Health, whether this woman is in her own home, in a nursing home, in a hospital or in a retirement home?

Hon Mrs Johns: Let me just comment on the whole situation with respect to long-term care, community and facility services. Members opposite would know that in the last government the Minister of Health recognized that there was a need for an expansion of long-term care services, and that at that point the government agreed to spend \$1.2 billion and to put 20,000 new beds into the province of Ontario.

That need was not new, of course, and we might ask the same question of the opposition: How many beds did they put into homes in the years they were in power, whether from 1990 to 1995 or previously?

The thing that's very important here is that seniors have to be protected in their homes. We need to have more beds for seniors. We need to ensure that every senior has the right level of care in the place where they

are, and that's what we're doing by creating new beds in the province.

POLICE SERVICES

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): Mr speaker, I'd like to extend my congratulations to you on your recent election and new uniform. I look forward to your ably dealing with, and blocking and deflecting, those shots that you are so well known for doing.

My question is to the Solicitor General. Minister, constituents in my riding of Oshawa take the issue of community safety very seriously, as I am sure they do throughout the province. The people I talk to regularly mention how they would like to see more police on the streets. I'm sure these are the concerns of the majority of people in the province of Ontario. Minister, can you tell us what our government is doing to address community safety and make sure there are more officers on the street?

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Solicitor General.

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Solicitor General): Thank you, Mr Speaker. First of all, I'd like to say that your job will now require you to be a judge—not a goal judge, I guess. I think it's going to be a lot more difficult.

I would also like to congratulate the member for Oshawa on his victory in the last election, and to thank him for raising the question. I know the member for Oshawa is very concerned about community safety. I have listened to a number of people across the province who are also concerned about safety within their own communities.

I am very pleased to say that this government believes frontline police officers are a very important initiative. In fact, that's what the community policing partnership program is about. It's an investment of about \$150 million to increase the number of frontline police officers to around 1,000 across the province. For the member for Oshawa this means another 42 frontline police officers in his community.

We believe the people in Ontario not only deserve to have communities that are safe but also have the right to feel safe within those communities.

The Speaker: Supplementary.

Mr Ouellette: I'd like to thank you Minister, for working with the policing community develop and implement real and effective community safety programs. You mentioned in your answer that funding is available for new police officers. Can you explain how this program ensures that officers hired through the community policing partnership program are additional officers and not just a replacement of retiring officers?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: The member is quite right: The program requires the policing to be an increase over the complement of frontline officers within those communities. So it will result in a net increase within those communities.

As of today, we've already added 534 new front-line police officers in the province. This is going to increase

the community policing and visibility through programs such as community patrols, enhanced traffic enforcement and drug and street crime enforcement.

Very recently I was at the OPP awards for bravery, where they recognized the perfect co-operation between the police and the communities. I think that is what this is all about: communities and police working together to make our communities safer for all.

IPPERWASH PROVINCIAL PARK

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): My question is to the Premier. For four years now we have been trying to get at the truth about what happened at Ipperwash. You've even refused to commit to holding a public inquiry.

The family of the deceased, Mr Dudley George, has launched a court action against you, and in a significant victory they were able to get the court to order you to appear for an examination for discovery on December 8 and 9.

My question to you is this: Can you confirm that you will, as ordered by the courts, appear for this examination of discovery on December 8 and 9?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I can confirm that I and the former Attorney General and all the ministers of the crown will comply. I have not been ordered by the court to appear then. I have been asked to appear, and lawyers will work a convenient date. That will be the same for Mr Harnick, that will be the same for the Solicitor General, should they still wish to talk with him, and it will be the same for me. Of course we'll cooperate.

Mr Phillips: Four weeks before the election was called this is what the papers said: "Premier Mike Harris says he will testify in December about the decision to use force against native protesters at Ipperwash Provincial Park in 1995." That was before the election. You promised the people of Ontario that you would appear.

The George family is one of extremely limited resources; you have the taxpayers behind you. The George family has spent four years trying to get the truth out of you; for four years you have stonewalled this issue. Four weeks before the election, you said you would testify; now you are saying, I think, that you are not going to accept that responsibility.

Premier, if you have nothing to hide, what possible reason do you have for not appearing at this court-ordered examination-for-discovery hearing on December 8 and 9?

Hon Mr Harris: You hear funny things, I have to say to the member. If you would listen to what I say, I said four years ago I would comply, I said before the election I would comply and I said today in response to your question I would comply.

Here are the facts: No dates have been set for discovery. Any dates we have heard about to date have been arbitrarily set by the plaintiffs' counsel. Our counsel will

be happy to comply and we will comply with all of the dates as appropriate.

That's what I've said before, that's what I've said now and that's what I say in the future.

TEACHER TESTING

Mr Wayne Wetlaufer (Kitchener Centre): I also want to add my congratulations to you, Mr Speaker, on ascending to the throne, if you will.

My question is for the Minister of Education. I have an article here from the Kitchener-Waterloo Record. It discusses the issue of teacher testing. It says that tests for teachers make sense, but it also goes on to say that the key for the province is to devise a test that truly determines how effective a teacher is in a classroom.

The paper questions our government's ability to set out an effective test that will show us exactly how our teachers are doing. Can you assure me and my constituents that this government will be able to have an effective teacher testing program?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education): Mr Speaker, my congratulations to you on what is probably the toughest position in this chamber.

I'd also like to thank the honourable member for Kitchener Centre for the question. I know that quality education is certainly a high-priority issue with him, as it is with this government, and our goal is to give our children the best education possible. One way we ensure that we're doing that is to ask the tough questions of ourselves: Are we meeting the quality standard?

1450

Testing programs are one way that we do that. We test students to make sure that they are learning what they need to learn, we test schools and school boards to ensure that they're doing what needs to be done, and the next logical step will also be to extend a teacher testing program to teachers to ensure that we have the best teachers we can have.

Mr Wetlaufer: I thank the minister for her commitment to the quality of education here in Ontario, but my constituents have told me that many of the schools and many of the boards across the province already have programs that assess teachers. I would like to be able to assure my constituents that any teacher testing program that this government carries out is going to be effective in evaluating the abilities of teachers. Can the minister assure my constituents that this will be the case?

Hon Mrs Ecker: I think every parent knows the difference that an excellent teacher can make to that child's school year. We all know and have met and have experienced many excellent teachers in the province out there, and we know we have many excellent teachers. But we also know that we need to do more to make sure that that standard of excellence can be maintained and that the teachers have the most up-to-date knowledge, skills and abilities to serve our children, and a teacher testing program is how we are going to accomplish this.

We are working with our education partners to get the best advice we can on how we can have a consistent, good-quality program across the province that not only provides support for teachers, because many of them may require that as well, but also makes sure that every teacher who is standing in front of a classroom is as good as they can be.

I've been very pleased with the discussions we've had to date. I look forward to meeting with all of the very important groups in the education sector to achieve another important aspect of our quality agenda.

SENIORS' HEALTH SERVICES

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-East York): To the Minister of Health about this weekend's reports on retirement homes: My question is not just about the inadequacy in many retirement homes, it's about the need for adequate home care, more nursing home beds, the need for subacute and convalescent hospital beds. Seniors who could live at home with adequate community supports and home care are being forced into retirement homes because they have no options. Meanwhile, retirement homes are accepting patients who would really be better off with increased medical attention in either nursing homes, where there are no beds available, or in hospitals, where there are no convalescent beds.

I've sent you an open letter with six proposals—this is directly within your ministry—for example, funding to open new subacute and convalescent beds in hospitals; organizing a joint review of hospital discharge standards and practices, you and the OHA and other interested parties; expanding home care budgets, because the quicker, sicker discharges are taking up what should be going to support long-term-care patients; and fast-tracking nursing bed creations, perhaps by conversion.

These all fall within your ministry, Minister. Would you give consideration to the proposals I've put forward to try and end this crisis of inappropriate care in retirement homes?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): As the member knows, our government in the past few years since we were elected has indicated our concern for the safety and the welfare of seniors in this province. In fact, our Premier identified that we needed to have a minister with special responsibility for seniors. At the same time, we recognize that previous governments had not made any commitment to construct any new long-term beds for about 10 years. Again, our government exhibited leadership, and we indicated that we would build 20,000 additional beds for seniors in this province.

We also indicated that we were going to be expanding community services for nursing and therapy, Meals on Wheels. As you know, we have increased funding for community services by 43% in order that we can provide the compassionate care necessary.

Ms Lankin: Minister, we can have a long debate back and forth about what you have done, but right now there

are many seniors without options who are being forced into inadequate care in the private retirement home sector, and I'm asking you to join with us to try to do something about that.

I've put forward six proposals. Let me give you two others. Make funding available to immediately operate and publicize a telephone hotline for complaints and advocacy and have that number posted in the retirement homes and have it given to families.

Minister, how about we work together and we pass regulations on standards of care? Hospitals are now discharging people into these retirement homes because care isn't available in the senior's own home. That is the only option available to hospital dischargers. We need standards-of-care regulation. It is not good enough for your colleague to say, "We'll look at self-regulation by the industry." This is a vulnerable population. They are in great need. That makes it ripe for exploitation. You must step in and save this situation.

Hon Mrs Witmer: I will refer that to the minister with responsibility for seniors.

Hon Helen Johns (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, minister responsible for seniors and women): I would like to comment that there are a number of things we are prepared to work with, and I would be happy to work with the critic for seniors if she would like to work with me. We certainly are working with the Ontario Residential Care Association right now to look at self-regulation within the industry. We believe that's very important.

I also think it's very important to recognize that within the laws that are in place at this particular point, whether it be the Tenant Protection Act, the Health Protection and Promotion Act, the Ontario building code, the Ontario fire code, the Regulated Health Professions Act, there are laws out there that enable municipalities to monitor and regulate this.

What one of the articles said in the Star this morning, which I think is important to bring to everyone's attention, was that the seniors secretariat was going out today to look at problems such as poor food and overcrowding. They asked the gentleman who is the manager of Toronto public health if he needed any permission to do this, and he said: "We don't need permission. We can go right into these homes. We have the ability to do that."

SUPREME COURT OF CANADA

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): New question, the member for Guelph-Wellington.

Mrs Brenda Elliott (Guelph-Wellington): Thank you, Speaker.

The Speaker: That was my mistake. I apologize. I looked that way, but I was a little bit premature and then moved over there. That was my fault. The member for Windsor-St Clair. I guess we're both a little bit slow. The member for St Paul's.

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): My question is for the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, who I believe

is coming on down, in regard to the minister's letter to the federal Minister of Justice decrying judicial activism.

It is time for this government to take responsibility for this new-found court bashing. It is time for you to rise in this House and take responsibility for that letter by naming those decisions which this government takes issue with in its letter to the federal justice minister. What exactly does this minister say with respect to the Supreme Court of Canada decision that it takes issue with?

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Government House Leader): I would like to congratulate the member on his election to this Legislature first.

When we're talking about a serious issue, as I have written to the federal minister on, it requires a little bit of understanding. Our leaders, when trying to resolve our constitutional differences in the Meech Lake case and in the Charlottetown accord, agreed at that time there was a problem with the appointment of our judiciary. Since that time there have been many, many decisions that have been decided by the judiciary at different levels, and we believe that many of these decisions lead to social and policy implications. What we want to do is have a public forum to discuss this matter, to come to some resolutions, because this is a long-standing problem that we must address.

Mr Bryant: Minister, I never got an answer to my question, but perhaps you might have spoken with the Honourable Attorney General first before sending your letter, because right now the province of Ontario is challenging, for example, the gun control legislation.

1500

Let me get this straight. There is the good kind of judicial activism, where it's consistent with the neo-conservative principles of this government, and then there is the bad kind of judicial activism, where it's inconsistent with the principles of this government.

Would the minister please rise and explain the difference between good and bad judicial activism?

Hon Mr Sterling: There are many people who acknowledge that there is presently a situation where the lines between legislators and the judiciary are becoming muddled. We have an obligation to try to improve the institutions in this country and in this province. Therefore, I thought the opposition would have embraced the idea of clarifying the roles of what we should do as legislators and what judges should do as judges, and that would be welcome. I would have thought we would have had a co-operative spirit by all members of this Legislature to try to improve our system.

Right now we are dealing with a number of situations where the role is becoming muddled. The Supreme Court judges have expressed their displeasure with the present system, and I think there is some displeasure by the public at large.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mrs Brenda Elliott (Guelph-Wellington): My question today is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Our government promised in the Blueprint to ensure that Ontario farmers get their fair share of federal dollars. My question is very simple: Can you tell this House if Ottawa has been listening? Can you tell us if Ontario farmers are getting their fair share of safety-net dollars from the federal Liberal government?

Hon Ernie Hardeman (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): Thank you to the member for Guelph-Wellington for the wonderful question. The member from Guelph-Wellington raises a very important issue, and it is also the number one issue for Ontario farmers.

On July 26, I wrote to the federal Minister of Agriculture expressing Ontario's concern over unilateral changes to the safety net program. Let me quote from our throne speech:

"Ontario's farmers work hard to succeed, and deserve fair treatment. Last year, Ontario farmers supplied 23% of Canada's agricultural production, but received only 16% of federal government...safety-net expenditures."

Ontario is being short-changed by \$20 million a year. Farmers in Guelph-Wellington deserve to be treated the same as farmers in Saskatchewan. You can't rob Peter to pay Paul. Ontario deserves its fair share of federal funding.

Mrs Elliott: I quite agree that our farmers deserve their fair share.

In the federal throne speech, very little was said about agriculture, and many view this as a slap in the face of Ontario farmers.

You mentioned in your letter that unilateral changes were discussed. I would like to ask you, Minister, if you have received assurances from Minister Vanclief to give any comfort to Ontario farmers.

Hon Mr Hardeman: We have received a reply but we did not receive an answer.

As promised in our government's Blueprint, we will continue to press the federal government to base its programs on the size of the farm sector in Ontario, and by living up to our commitment to meet the 40% share, which we have already accomplished. Our government believes that the federal government's undermining of crop insurance programs and tinkering with long-standing safety-net arrangements to provide a quick fix for one region is not the answer to the other.

The status quo for Ontario farmers is not acceptable. I would encourage members of the official opposition to ask their counterparts in Ottawa to ensure that the federal government stands up for Ontario's farmers.

JUSTICE SYSTEM

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): My question is to the Premier. Last week, a five-week inquest was completed into the death of Zachary Antidormi, a two-

and-a-half-year-old Hamilton boy who was murdered at the hands of a mentally ill neighbour as he was riding his wagon near his home.

This inquest came out with 60 recommendations. The two most important, and the two that you have the power to immediately implement, involve the sharing of information. A change in legislation will compel doctors to warn police about mentally ill patients if they believe they're a threat to themselves or to others, and a change that would give police officers the power to share with doctors information on criminal records, information on violent acts or threats that they believe that individual would be to themselves or to others.

These two very simple changes to our legislation would go a long way in protecting people across this province and ensuring that a death like Zachary's does not occur again to another Ontario boy or to anyone else. Can you commit today to immediately bringing in these two changes to legislation to protect Ontarians?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I think the Solicitor General could respond.

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Solicitor General): First of all, the recommendations were just issued on Friday. The ministry is reviewing them, but I will tell you this: One of the directions the government has taken is trying to create an integrated justice system where this type of information passes through. We've learned through some of the previous inquiries that it's very necessary to have information passing to the courts, to the police and also providers within the community, whether they're shelters or otherwise. These are ways that we can somehow support victims and really improve the justice system.

Once again, we are reviewing the recommendations of the inquiry right now, along with other ministries that have had recommendations through that inquiry as well. We think it's very important for us to have this integrated justice system, where we have this information passing through so we can truly protect victims.

Mr Agostino: The Premier, in the throne speech last week, said you're not government. The reality is you are government. You are responsible to act. There have been recommendations in the past in similar situations which have not been corrected, and therefore tragedy has occurred again. You, Minister, have the power today to change those two pieces of legislation, and if you do that, this type of tragedy could be prevented. In speaking to Lori and Tony Antidormi, the parents of Zachary, this morning, they believe very much that had those two changes been in place, this tragedy could have been avoided. They believe the system has let them down. They believe the system obviously has let down a two-and-a-half-year-old boy.

We believe these changes can make a difference. There have been similar recommendations in the past. We don't need studies. We don't need reviews. We don't need task forces. All we need is for you today to commit to immediately changing these two pieces of legislation. As his mother said, "Let's do Zachary's memory justice and implement these recommendations."

Minister, will you today change those two pieces of the freedom of information act to allow the sharing of information and prevent similar tragedies in the future?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: First of all, I'd like to convey condolences to the family. These are very tragic situations. I think we can get some good out of tragic situations if we can somehow make things change.

I will tell the member this: As I spoke about the integrated justice project right now, it is currently being implemented. We also believe that this information-passing, again—that's been a problem in the past where we've had some decisions or some information on bail hearings, on people getting out of prison, that hasn't been conveyed to the police and we can't prevent some tragic situations. That's why we believe—not only in our ministry but in the Attorney General's ministry, as well as in corrections—in working all together to have this integrated system, because information is somehow a very good defence that we can have to aid victims of crime, and we believe that's very important.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): May I, before I begin, add my personal congratulations on your recent election to Speaker.

My question is to the minister responsible for children. York region is proud to have been chosen as one of the five areas named as the demonstration project sites to test different approaches to supporting early child development and parenting. This program will provide services to parents and children from age zero to three. I understand other communities can become involved through the \$30-million challenge fund announced in the April 1999 budget. Can you explain more about this fund and how communities can become involved?

1510

Hon Margaret Marland (Minister without Portfolio [Children]): I thank this member for her question. The great news about the early years challenge fund is that it's part of the recommendations of the earlier study, which our government received in April of this year from Dr Fraser Mustard and the Hon Margaret McCain.

The early years challenge fund itself is \$30 million and it's going to be available to communities throughout the province, in terms of them developing at their local community level early child development and parenting centres. The marvellous thing is that this is going to be as designed, for those communities to bring forward what they need, what's identified as an ideal program within their local community, rather than what has always been done previously, which is that Toronto develops a cookie-cutter design for these centres and they make the decisions for the whole province. This is locally driven.

We're very proud of the fact that we are implementing one of the most important recommendations of Dr Fraser Mustard and the Hon Margaret McCain and I take this opportunity to thank them and their reference group for

the tremendous amount of work they did on the Early Years Study.

Mrs Munro: Minister, you promised to appoint a task group to advise the government on the early years initiative. When are you planning to follow through on your commitment?

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): It's nice to hear you answering questions this time, Margaret.

Hon Mrs Marland: It's nice to hear the deputy leader for the Liberal Party, now on the front bench, is still taking part in question period.

I say with sincerity that the membership of the early years task group will be announced very shortly. We recently announced the demonstration sites throughout the province, and the role of the early years task group is equally important to the announcement of those demonstration sites.

The early years task group is going to look at these five sites all over the province. This initiative will result in a framework being developed not by the government, I emphasize, but by the advice of the task group, which will look throughout the province at what the basic essentials for that framework should be for an early child development and parenting centre in the local community. Again it's locally driven, but there will be an overall framework and a core program standard.

STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): My question is for the Minister of Education. On October 8, I, along with two of your area Tory members, met with the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board trustees and the chair of the board, Ray Mulholland, for the purpose of talking about the fact that there's not enough funding for educational assistance to allow all the children who need that assistance, because of the special needs they have, to attend school. It was pointed out to us at the meeting that the freeze you currently have on the ISA 2 plus 3 allocations is extremely detrimental to Hamilton. In fact, it's unfair to Hamilton-Wentworth in terms of the numbers and what that means.

As I mentioned in my member's statement, our board to their credit, in my opinion, has gone ahead and authorized the hiring of enough educational assistants to at least put the students back in school. However, it doesn't go anywhere near meeting all the needs; and just because the kids are actually in school, that doesn't mean they're getting the assistance they need to fully participate.

Will you agree today to thaw the freeze and ensure that our Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board receives the \$3.5 million for special-needs kids that they deserve to get?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education): I have heard about this situation in Hamilton from my caucus colleague from Stoney Creek, who has been pushing very hard for the school boards to exercise their responsi-

bilities for special education funding and to meet the needs of those children.

We've all heard from parents who have a special-needs child who perhaps were told the child would never be capable of learning. Yet we know that with the right support those children can do a great deal, and many are, as we speak, across the province. That's why we listened so carefully to the advice we were given about how to give boards more money for special education, which we have done. We were also told we needed to protect that money, to make sure that a board would not spend less, but we made sure that boards had the flexibility to spend more if they felt that was required for their community, and this board is indeed doing precisely that.

Mr Christopherson: That is far from an acceptable answer. First of all, you need to know it's not just Hamilton, it's virtually every single community all across Ontario. You were told when you changed the funding formula this was going to happen. It's not something new. Secondly, don't talk to me about what the member from Stoney Creek did. He held a news conference before that meeting and he had the audacity to say that there needs to be some kind of audit before anything at all is done that would put those kids in the classroom.

Applause.

Mr Christopherson: Why are you applauding? So what I'm hearing is that it's OK to leave disabled kids at home while you bring in an auditor—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. Will the member take his seat. We were doing very well until the very end. Unfortunately, I cannot hear. There are only a few seconds left. If the member will put the question, I will allow him to continue.

Mr Christopherson: I am shocked that there are members of the government who are laughing while this is going on and applauding the fact that one of their own members was trying to throw a red herring out there and prevent these kids from going back in the classroom. That's disgusting. It also points to the nature of the problem. Minister, our board needs this money. You have frozen the funding.

The Speaker: Will the member take his seat. The time for oral questions has ended.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): I rise on a point of privilege pursuant to standing orders 21(a), (b) and (c).

Mr Christopherson: On a point of order, Speaker: It appears to me that the minister wasn't given the opportunity that in the past—and certainly if you're changing the way the House operates, that is your right, sir, but in the past as long as there was a question placed, there was an obligation or opportunity for the minister to respond. Would you please afford the minister that?

The Speaker: You are correct. I will allow that. There was a point of privilege. I apologize to the member. My attention was diverted on a point of privilege that was coming up, and as a result of being diverted I actually

lost the time as well as the answer, so with indulgence I will allow the Minister of Education to respond.

Hon Mrs Ecker: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, because this is indeed a very important question, not only for the parents in Hamilton but across the province.

I know that the honourable member raises this question because he cares about the situation, as does my colleague from Stoney Creek. They have both been at those meetings. They are both pushing very hard to make sure there is a resolution to this issue. We know this board is getting even more money than they had before to help support the needs of children who have special needs. We know that we need to take a look at perhaps supporting boards in a different way, perhaps changing some rules. Flexibility is one of the issues.

There are some other recommendations that boards and groups that represent those with special needs have made to the government. We are looking at those, but it still remains the board's responsibility to take the increased resources they have received and meet the needs of children in their community.

GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURES

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): Mr Speaker, I rise on a point of privilege pursuant to standing orders 21(a), (b) and (c). In accordance with standing order 21(b), a copy of this point of privilege was provided to your office and the Clerk's office more than an hour ago.

The point of privilege relates to order in council 626/99, which was attached to the letter I forwarded to you. The OIC purports to grant legal sanction to the government's spending estimates for fiscal year 1998-99. The schedule appended to the OIC is identical to the schedule of Bill 96, the Supply Act, 1998, which did not receive third reading before the second session of the 36th Parliament was prorogued on December 18, 1998. Bill 96 was not reintroduced for debate in the third and final session of the 36th Parliament. Thus the House has yet to pass a Supply Act sanctioning the government's expenditures for the fiscal year 1998-99.

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The OIC was issued pursuant to section 14 of the Ministry of Treasury and Economics Act, RSO 1990, c.m. 37, section 14, which reads as follows: "Despite anything in this act, whenever the assembly has concurred in the report of the committee of supply recommending the passing of any estimates, the Lieutenant Governor in Council may authorize the payment of items of expenditure so concurred in."

This section of the act was introduced in 1972, when the Legislature's standing orders provided for a committee of supply. However, the committee of supply was abolished when the Legislature approved a package of amendments to the standing orders on July 25, 1989. The committee of supply, which was a committee of the whole House, was replaced with the standing committee on estimates. Because the committee of supply no longer

exists, section 14 of the Ministry of Treasury and Economics Act is inoperative. Therefore, the OIC has no legal validity. Under section 14, the cabinet may authorize the payment of expenditures. However, if there is no committee of supply, then it follows that the Legislature cannot concur in its report. The statutory trigger leading to the promulgation of the OIC no longer exists. The passage of the Supply Act is no longer a pro forma exercise in the Ontario Legislature but has become an occasion for meaningful debate on the supply business of the crown. Indeed, tonight we will be debating supply.

Therefore, it can be argued that the promulgation of order in council 626/99 before passage of the Supply Act, now that the House has agreed to make debate on the act a meaningful step in the legislative process, raises the question of the crown's accountability to the House for its stewardship of the public purse. Neither section 14 of the Ministry of Treasury and Economics Act nor order in council 626/99 will render debate on that Supply Act meaningful, since the government, by means of the order in council, will have already obtained legal authority for its spending.

In this context, it is important to note Speaker Stockwell's ruling in the Legislature on January 22, 1997, in the matter of a pamphlet issued in the name of Al Leach, the former Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. The pamphlet discussed the government's plans for the amalgamation of the six municipalities then constituting Metropolitan Toronto in terms which implied that the proposed amalgamation was a fait accompli even though legislation implementing amalgamation had not yet been approved by the House. After quoting from the pamphlet, the Speaker ruled:

"In my opinion, they"—that is, quoted passages from the pamphlet—"convey the impression that the passage of the requisite legislation was not necessary or was a foregone conclusion, or that the assembly and the Legislature had a pro forma, tangential, even inferior role in the legislative and lawmaking process, and in doing so, they appear to diminish the respect that is due to this House."

That's excerpted from Hansard. Speaker Stockwell then ruled that Mr Leach had committed a *prima facie* case of contempt against the Legislature.

We argue that OIC 626/99, even if it is legal, similarly falls into the category of executive actions which convey the impression that passage of the requisite legislation, in this case the Supply Act, was unnecessary or a foregone conclusion or that the Legislature has an inferior role in the law-making process. We ask you to rule on this, Mr Speaker, because it is fundamental to parliamentary democracy that before legislation, particularly something as significant as supply, is passed, it ought to be debated in the Legislature. Attempts to stifle that debate are no more than an attempt to stifle the opposition's ability to hold accountable a government that doesn't want to be responsible, a government that shows its arrogance and contempt for this House by attempting to pass supply without any meaningful debate in the last year of this

House. We ask for your ruling on that point of privilege, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I want to thank the member for providing the documents in advance, and to indicate to the member that I will reserve a ruling.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Government House Leader): Mr Speaker, in spite of the fact that I was given no notice of the point of privilege, I must say that before we took the actions which we did last year, we of course had significant debate after the estimates were reported to this House on concurrence. We had several days of debate when the opposition members were given free rein to criticize and talk about any particular topic that they might want.

I might also point out in terms of the Supply Act that the parliamentary tradition in the past has been that the Supply Act would be called, there would be no debate, it would be called for a vote and it would be voted upon, and then we would proceed on with other matters. Recently, and last year, there was an attempt to use the Supply Act as a method of forestalling the ending of the session. We obtained legal opinion from our finance department who told us that our actions with regard to the special award were legal and they were in fact within our legal ability.

I believe, as Speaker Turner believed, that this is a matter for legal or judicial interpretation and that if a citizen or a member of the opposition wants to go to the court and deal with it there, then it is their privilege to do that. In fact, Speaker Turner said on a matter which was very similar to this that he was "not competent to rule on whether it does or does not constitute a matter of privilege." That ruling stands today and I hope that will be your ruling in the future.

The Speaker: Again, I would like to thank the member for supplying the documents and providing them in advance. I would like to indicate to the House that I will reserve ruling on this matter.

PETITIONS

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): The people of northwestern Ontario are very frustrated by the inadequacy of the northern health travel grant. My colleague from Thunder Bay-Atikokan and I have launched a campaign and many petitions are coming in.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the northern health travel grant was introduced in 1987 in recognition of the fact that northern Ontario residents are often forced to receive treatment outside their own communities because of the lack of available services; and

"Whereas the Ontario government acknowledged that the costs associated with that travel should not be fully borne by those residents and therefore that financial support should be provided by the Ontario government through the travel grant program; and

"Whereas travel, accommodation and other costs have escalated sharply since the program was first put in place, particularly in the area of air travel; and

"Whereas the Ontario government has provided funds so that southern Ontario patients needing care at the Northwestern Ontario Cancer Centre have all their expenses paid while receiving treatment in the north which creates a double standard for health care delivery in the province; and

"Whereas northern Ontario residents should not receive a different level of health care nor be discriminated against because of their geographic locations;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, petition the Ontario Legislature to acknowledge the unfairness and inadequacy of the northern health travel grant program and commit to a review of the program with a goal of providing 100% funding of the travel costs for residents needing care outside their communities until such time as that care is available in our communities."

I'm very pleased to sign that petition.

PARAMEDICS

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): I'm pleased to present petitions signed by over 1,000 ambulance paramedics. This is on behalf of myself and the member for Beaches-East York. The petition reads as follows:

"To the Honourable Lieutenant Governor and Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Health this past spring amended Ontario regulation 501/97 under the Ambulance Act so that paramedics are considered no longer qualified to do their job if they accumulate a minimum of six demerit points on their driving record;

"Whereas this amended regulation has resulted in at least one paramedic being fired from employment;

"Whereas the Ministry of Health regulation is far more punitive and harsh than the Ministry of Transportation, which monitors and enforces traffic safety through the Highway Traffic Act;

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"Whereas the Ministry of Transportation mails out a notice to drivers at six to nine demerit points and suspends a person's driver's licence at 15 points for a 30-day period;

"Whereas none of the other emergency services in Ontario, e.g. fire and police services, are held to the same standard or punished so harshly;

"Whereas this amended regulation is not needed since other sections of the Ambulance Act protect the public against unsafe driving and/or criminal behaviour by paramedics (specifically)—that's almost the fourth incident, Sergeant at Arms, of people falling off that step; you've

got to do something, sir—"O. Reg. 501/97, part III, section 6, subsections 8, 9 and 10);

"Whereas the Ministry of Health actions are blatantly unjust and punitive, and they discriminate against paramedics,

"We, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, beg leave to petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately eliminate any references to the accumulation of demerit points during employment from O. Reg. 501/97 under the Ambulance Act (specifically, part III, section 6, subsection 7), thereby allowing the Highway Traffic Act to apply to paramedics; and

"To order the immediate reinstatement of paramedics who have been fired under the regulation."

Might I say that there are employer groups that agree with this change and I proudly add my name to these petitioners on behalf of the Ontario New Democratic caucus.

TOBACCO CONTROL ACT

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): I have a petition signed by many ratepayers in my riding.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Tobacco Control Act attempts to limit smoking by young people; and

"Whereas secondary students are not permitted to smoke on school grounds; and

"Whereas secondary school students are thus forced into situations whereby they are placed in immediate physical danger,

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To review and revise the Tobacco Control Act as necessary to carry out the intent of the act in such ways as not to place citizens in physical danger and to consult both smoking and non-smoking citizens during the review process."

I sign this on behalf of the people who have presented it.

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): Like my colleague the member for Thunder Bay-Superior North, I too have a number of petitions signed by my constituents who are concerned about the lack of support for those who have to travel out of their home communities in order to receive health care. In some cases, individuals are having to reach into their own pockets for thousands of dollars in order to get medically necessary care. I won't repeat all the "whereases" that my colleague has already read into the record, but just the "therefore":

"We, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, petition the Ontario Legislature to: acknowledge the unfairness and inadequacy of the northern health travel grant program and commit to a review of the program with a goal of providing 100% funding of the travel costs for residents

needing care outside their communities until such time as that care is available in our communities."

I have signatures at this point of some 253 concerned residents of northwestern Ontario, and I affix my own signature in full accord.

PARAMEDICS

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I have a petition here with around 800 signatures with regard to the following:

"To the Honourable Lieutenant Governor and Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Health this past spring amended O. Reg. 501/97 under the Ambulance Act so that paramedics are considered no longer qualified to do their job if they accumulate a minimum of six demerit points on their driving record;

"Whereas this amended regulation has resulted in at least one paramedic being fired from employment;

"Whereas the Ministry of Health's regulation is far more punitive and harsh than the Ministry of Transportation, which monitors and enforces traffic safety through the Highway Traffic Act;

"Whereas the Ministry of Transportation mails out a notice to drivers at six to nine demerit points and suspends a person's driver's licence at 15 points for a 30-day period;

"Whereas none of the other emergency services in Ontario, e.g. fire and police services, are held to the same standard or punished so harshly;

"Whereas this amended regulation is not needed since other sections of the Ambulance Act protect the public against unsafe driving and/or criminal behaviour by paramedics (specifically," and it's listed;

"Whereas the Ministry of Health actions are blatantly unjust and punitive, and they discriminate against paramedics,

"We, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, beg leave to petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately eliminate any reference to the accumulation of demerit points during employment from O. Reg. 501/97 under the Ambulance Act (specifically, part III, section 6, subsection 7), thereby allowing the Highway Traffic Act to apply to paramedics; and

"To order the immediate reinstatement of paramedics who have been fired under the regulation."

I sign that on behalf of the NDP Caucus.

PALLIATIVE CARE

Mr Bob Wood (London West): Mr Speaker, may I first congratulate you on your election as Speaker. I know you will serve the House well.

I have a petition signed by 90 people, which reads as follows:

"Whereas most Ontario residents require adequate access to effective hospice palliative care in time of need;

"Whereas meeting the needs of Ontarians of all ages for relief of preventable pain and suffering as well as the provision of emotional and spiritual support needs to be a priority in our health care system;

"Whereas the Legislative Assembly of Ontario unanimously passed a resolution supporting the right to hospice and palliative care on October 15, 1998, as presented by Bob Wood, MPP, which called for a task force to be appointed to fully implement an effective hospice palliative care bill of rights;

"We, the undersigned, petition the government of Ontario to fulfill the resolution, as approved by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, by appointing the hospice palliative task force and giving it a suitable mandate to fulfill the requirements of the resolution.

"Hospice palliative care is care which aims to relieve suffering and improve the quality of life of people who are living with or dying from advanced illness, or those who are bereaved."

PARAMEDICS

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): This petition is for justice for ambulance paramedics.

"To the Honourable Lieutenant Governor and the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Minister of Health this past spring amended O. Reg. 501/97 under the Ambulance Act so that paramedics are considered no longer qualified to do their job if they accumulate a minimum of six demerit points on their driving record;

"Whereas the amended regulation has resulted in at least one paramedic being fired from employment;

"Whereas the Ministry of Health's regulation is far more punitive and harsh than the Ministry of Transportation's, which monitors and enforces traffic safety through the Highway Traffic Act;

"Whereas the Ministry of Transportation mails out a notice to drivers at six to nine demerit points and suspends a person's driver's licence at 15 points for a 30-day period;

"Whereas none of the other emergency services in Ontario, e.g. fire and police services, are held to the same standard or punished so harshly;

"Whereas this amended regulation is not needed since the other sections of the Ambulance Act protect the public against unsafe driving and/or criminal behaviour by paramedics (specifically O. Reg. 501/97, part III, section 6, subsections 8, 9 and 10);

"Whereas the Ministry of Health actions are blatantly unjust and punitive, and they discriminate against paramedics;

"We, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, beg leave to petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately eliminate any references to the accumulation of demerit points during employment from O. Reg. 501/97 under the Ambulance Act (specifically, part III, section 6, subsection 7), therefore allowing the Highway Traffic Act to apply to paramedics; and

"To order the immediate reinstatement of paramedics who have been fired under the regulation."

I add my signature to the petition.

CHILD PROSTITUTION

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas it is vital that protection for children involved in prostitution be implemented in the province of Ontario immediately; and

"Whereas in the 36th Parliament of Ontario, a private member's bill was introduced on two occasions to allow for this protection;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to pass meaningful legislation regarding protection for these children."

I affix my signature to this petition.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition on a very important issue, which reads as follows:

"Whereas the hospitals in the Niagara region that have incurred deficits as a result of underfunding by the Harris government are being forced to cut services to patients even more than in the past few years;

"Whereas services for patients in our hospitals have already been cut as a result of budget slashing by the Conservative government of Mike Harris;

"Whereas Niagara hospitals may be compelled to impose user fees and increase user fees already in effect;

"Therefore, be it resolved that the Harris government provide significantly increased funding to Niagara hospitals' operating budgets to avoid further cuts to patient services and to restore services that have been eliminated in the past."

I affix my signature as I am in complete agreement with this petition.

Hon Frank Klees (Minister without Portfolio): Mr Speaker, I too would like to add my congratulations on your election and to wish you all the best in this House.

1540

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

Consideration of the speech of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor at the opening of the session.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The member for Scarborough Centre.

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): Thank you, Mr Speaker, and let me start off by extending my congratulations on your election.

I move, seconded by Mr Tilson, that a humble address be presented to Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor as follows:

To the Honourable Hilary M. Weston, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario:

We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario, now assembled, beg leave to thank Your Honour for the gracious speech Your Honour has addressed to us.

Before I begin, I'd like to indicate that I'll be sharing my time for remarks with the member for Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey.

On behalf of the people I represent in the riding of Scarborough Centre, it's my privilege and it'd my honour to move today the adoption of the speech from the throne from the government led by Premier Harris.

I was heartened to hear the reference to the late Frank Faubert at the beginning of the throne speech. Frank made his mark in this place as the member for Scarborough-Ellesmere, the riding that I came here to represent in 1995. I've spent nearly 20 years of my life fighting to make my community a better place to live, and I spent a great deal of that time working with and, yes, occasionally against Frank. Indeed, we even ran against each other at one time for the mayoralty of Scarborough.

Frank was a hard-working politician. He was a wonderful family man and a great Scarborough friend. He's sadly missed, and I extend my deepest sympathies to his wife, Marilyn, and to his family.

In my remarks today I will be referring not only to the throne speech of last Thursday but also to our very first throne speech in September 1995. I would like to do so not only because I am now, as I was then, a member of a government recently elected with a full agenda ahead of us, but because Ontario today is a province with many accomplishments behind it, many of which were hoped for and predicted in that throne speech just four years ago.

Yet, while we are indeed a better province today, there are still greater things ahead of us and much work needs to be done to achieve them. That is why the revolutionary spirit of our first term is continuing into our second.

The first change I would like to remark upon is that this throne speech was delivered by Her Honour Hilary M. Weston, who succeeded the Honourable Henry N.R. Jackman. Her Honour has discharged her duties with a freshness that has been tempered by her quiet grace and dignity. It's comforting to know that we need never worry that Her Honour would ever do otherwise. She is a credit to the monarchy and an asset to us all.

The next change I would like to comment on is the one that is visible to us right here in this chamber—and I don't mean the carpeting. There are fewer of us members here today than there were for the last throne speech in April. That's because of the implementation of the Fewer Politicians Act, which reduced the number of seats in the Legislature from 130 to 103. The legislation and the promise to reduce the number of MPPs were based on this principle espoused in the Common Sense Revolution: "It's time for government to make the same types of

changes all of us have had to make in our own families and in our jobs."

In the throne speech we debate today, our continuing commitment to do better for less is reflected in these words:

"Your government, however, acknowledges that the job of controlling the size and cost of government never ends. To ensure that the budget stays balanced, it will introduce a Balanced Budget Act that would penalize politicians who run deficits."

"All branches of government must treat people fairly and with respect. To that end, your government will introduce a Declaration of Taxpayer Rights that protects individuals and businesses in all their dealings with government agencies."

Businesses not long ago realized that customer service is a key component of whatever product or service they provide. It is time for government to do the same thing. Prompt, courteous service is just a small part of what Ontarians expect and deserve from government, for we have never felt, as some do, that people don't expect much from government. In fact, they expect quite a lot. They want jobs for themselves and their children and their grandchildren. They want value for their tax dollars and for none of those tax dollars to be wasted. They want safe communities. They want a sound health care system and they want schools to teach their children well.

In 1994 Premier Mike Harris put forward a bold notion to the people of Ontario. He put forward the idea that tax cuts, especially to income taxes and payroll taxes, would actually create jobs. This was a relatively new idea in Canada and quite revolutionary in Ontario, which had only seen taxes go up for some 20 years. For years families had been working harder and harder, but high taxes meant they were taking home less and less in real terms. They struggled to make ends meet and balance their budgets, and the 65 tax increases imposed by the two previous two governments made things worse.

We chose to defy the conventional wisdom that taxes go only one way, which is up. We chose to defy the conventional wisdom that only massive government spending could create jobs. We chose to have the confidence that if we let Ontarians keep more of their own hard-earned dollars, they would spend, save, invest or pay down debt, all of which would boost the economy and create jobs. We cut the provincial income rate by 30% in our first term, putting about \$1,385 a year back into the budget of a typical Ontario family. That's enough to buy two quality appliances.

Putting more money into people's pockets was just part of the job creation formula, however. Making sure that businesses could create jobs was another one. So we cut the workers' compensation payroll tax, we froze Hydro rates and eliminated the employer health tax on payrolls of \$400,000 or less. As Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, I led the repeal of the job-killing hiring quota law. We promised in our 1995 throne speech that "these measures will stimulate job creation across Ontario and bring renewal and growth to all regions of

the province." Guess what. They did just that. Since that throne speech, 571,000 new jobs have been created in Ontario. We've gone from an unemployment rate of 8.7% to a rate of 6.4%.

In our first term, we cut taxes 69 times. When we first proposed these tax cuts, many professors and pundits scoffed at us. Now, after seeing Ontario's success lead Canada out of the recession and to stay competitive, other provinces and states are cutting taxes too.

Middle-class families, however, need to remain confident that we are in their corner, making sure that they get to keep more of their dollars to spend on what's important to them. We must do all we can to help the economy to continually create jobs and opportunities for the future.

1550

That is why we're cutting income taxes and property taxes again, to put \$4 billion back into the economy and create 825,000 new jobs. For a typical Ontario family these cuts will put \$805 a year back into their pockets.

Our property tax cuts are, I believe, a fitting finale to our long-overdue reforms of property taxes. Under the Liberals and NDP, the average household in Ontario saw its property taxes increase by 32%, even after factoring out inflation. And this was on top of an outdated system of assessment that penalized suburban homeowners, indeed many in my own riding. Another punishing aspect was the education portion of the property tax, which saw massive increases with no corresponding rise in education quality.

Now that we have reformed assessment and given municipalities the tools they need to recognize special circumstances, it's time to give homeowners and renters a break. It's interesting to note that over 75% of homeowners in Scarborough have seen their property tax bills go down with the new assessment. We will be working to bring those taxes down even further by cutting the education portion of residential property taxes by 20% and have already implemented half of that.

As promised in last May's budget, we will continue to cut the corporate income tax rate for small business until it is 4.75%, the lowest in Canada.

Some say we cannot afford tax cuts. The fact is, with the current unwillingness of our federal counterparts to provide meaningful tax relief, we can't afford not to cut taxes. Tax cuts keep our economy competitive and working families feeling secure and positive about the future.

Our 1995 throne speech summed up Ontario's truly dire welfare situation: "Previous governments spent billions of taxed and borrowed dollars on these programs and sank deeper into debt, while jobs disappeared and the economy dragged. Ontarians know this is wrong. They want a welfare system that doesn't create dependency, but ends it."

That is why we proceeded almost immediately to lower welfare rates for able-bodied recipients. Seniors and the disabled were removed from the welfare rolls—where they should never have been in the first place—

into a distinct program suited to their needs. We implemented a work-for-welfare program that has enjoyed success while we're working towards greater success for the future.

The numbers speak to the effectiveness of our reforms. In 1995, 1.3 million Ontarians depended on welfare to survive. Since then, 437,000 people have left welfare dependency behind.

Then, as now, our particular concern is for children on welfare or in poverty. In 1995, our throne speech pointed to the poignancy of their situation and promised action: "To ensure a brighter future, your government will establish programs, including a school nutrition initiative, to provide children the support and encouragement they need."

We have indeed implemented a school nutrition program which, with support from the private sector, is providing meals to tens of thousands of school children every day.

Another initiative to benefit our youngest citizens is our Healthy Babies, Healthy Children program. Within 48 hours of discharge from the hospital, new mothers are contacted by a public health nurse who assesses the child and links the family with any needed services. More than 150,000 babies born each year are benefiting from this program.

We have put a new face on Ontario's welfare system and seen many improvements, but there's much more to do. We are determined to break the cycle of welfare dependency and, as we all know, the best social program in the world is a job. However, people can't get off welfare and hold a job if they're addicted to drugs. As a society we cannot turn our backs on drug abuse and the havoc it creates in a person's life. We will provide drug treatment to welfare recipients who use drugs to help them get back on their feet and back into the workforce.

In addition to treating people for drug abuse, our next welfare reforms will provide remedial reading, writing and math training for welfare recipients who can't pass a basic language or math test; expand mandatory work for welfare even further, including opening roads and parks maintenance programs for welfare recipients; and create a zero tolerance policy for welfare fraud. Anyone convicted of welfare fraud will be permanently banned from receiving welfare in Ontario. We will continue to work to turn welfare into a system that gets lives back on track.

As I went from door to door in this last election, people were telling me that health care was the number one provincial issue. When I asked them what they felt was important locally, the overwhelming response was community safety. In our 1995 throne speech, we pledged that the new government is committed to shifting the justice system's focus away from concern only for the criminal to include concern for the victim.

I believe that our first four years in government show that such a shift is well underway. We passed the Victims' Bill of Rights. To build on that achievement, we will introduce legislation to permanently establish the

Office for Victims of Crime to ensure that the principles of the Victims' Bill of Rights are respected.

More funding and training have put 534 new front-line cops on our streets. There will be a thousand more in total by next year. Parole is no longer a right as it was under previous governments but is a privilege to be earned. Under our tougher standards, 66% of offenders are now denied parole compared to just 41% five years ago. We piloted a strict discipline program which has produced a lower recidivism rate than other facilities for young offenders. We have pressed, and will continue to press, the federal government for real change to the Young Offenders Act. Tinkering simply isn't good enough.

Although there are those who say crime is no longer a serious problem, we think that when people do not feel safe in their own schools, streets and neighbourhoods, it is a problem. Just ask the residents of the north Scarborough neighbourhood recently terrorized by the bedroom rapist. There is no such thing as an acceptable level of crime. We will give police the tools and the support they need to crack down on drug dealers, squeegee people and aggressive panhandling to make our streets safer for law-abiding citizens. We will propose legislation that, if passed, will make it a provincial offence to threaten or harass through acts such as blocking people on sidewalks.

Some would have you believe that all squeegee people are poverty-stricken and/or homeless. For those who are, welfare and other programs are available. But I thought members might be interested in this item that appeared in the National Post on October 16:

"The pre-teen kids of some very upscale residents in the vicinity of Roxborough Drive West [ie Rosedale] ... are finding it fun—and profitable—to offer their services as polite, efficient window cleaners to motorists coming up the ramp from Mount Pleasant Road. A couple of days ago one of these well-mannered kids offered to clean my mud-splattered windshield.

"Had he come to Rosedale from somewhere else? 'No, I live here. It's neat to be a squeegee kid. I make good money.'"

1600

Whether you live in the city or are just visiting, you have the right to walk down the street or to go to public places without being harassed or intimidated by aggressive panhandlers. As a mother of two daughters in their early 20s, I must do all that I can to ensure their safety.

We will continue to toughen the parole system by revoking parole from ex-convicts who test positive for illegal drug use and fight the federal government's attempts to loosen parole standards that would set more criminals loose on our streets.

People should feel secure in their own homes, on their own streets and in their own communities. We will help to restore that feeling.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Is it proper in this House to be speaking about subject matters which are exclusively

the jurisdiction of the federal government, as the member has been doing over the last—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Question period was over quite some time ago, and a question isn't a point of order, sorry.

Mr Gerretsen: But I'm asking for an interpretation.

The Deputy Speaker: The Chair recognizes the speaker.

Ms Mushinski: Health care will always be an issue of concern to Ontarians and their government. That is why in 1995 we ran on a promise to spend at least \$17.4 billion annually on health care. But we acknowledged that, given changes in technology and our population, we could not continue to spend those dollars in the same way that we had before.

As we said in our throne speech in 1995: "Within the health care budget are the potential for savings and opportunities for reinvestment. We will continue to redirect savings in ways that maximize outcomes and provide the greatest benefit to people."

In our first term, we laid out a plan to restructure and renew our hospital system. That restructuring is still underway and will result in better, more modern hospitals delivering better services to our communities.

We also laid out an ambitious plan to create the first new long-term-care beds in a decade, update existing facilities and increase community care. These plans are also being implemented.

In my riding, the new Scarborough Hospital, Scarborough General division, has received reinvestments for renal dialysis, an MRI unit and substantial capital to upgrade its birthing centre and critical care wing.

We did all of this while having to endure a \$2.8-billion cut in federal support for health care. We not only made up for that cut out of our own budget but added \$1.5 billion in additional funding to health care, bringing health care spending to its highest level in Ontario history.

As promised, we will increase the health care budget by a further 20%, to \$22.7 billion in the year 2004, and we will continue to ensure that those dollars are spent in ways that provide the most modern and effective services possible to Ontarians.

In 1995, we began to address a widespread desire among parents and the wider public for more rigour and accountability in our education system. These parents were paying higher and higher education property taxes at the same time that they were disappointed in what their children were learning and how they were learning. We promised in our 1995 throne speech to "ensure a demanding core curriculum, regular testing of students and standardized report cards." As members will know, these proposals are now reality in Ontario schools, to the satisfaction of many parents, including the leader of the official opposition, who, as recently as the election campaign, stated: "Province-wide testing is a good development. I like that. I've got four kids of my own, three of them in high school. I like the new report card;

they're easier to understand. I like a good, solid core curriculum as a parent."

Hon Margaret Marland (Minister without Portfolio [Children]): Who said that?

Ms Marilyn Mushinski: Dalton McGuinty, National Post, June 2, 1999.

The next step in our plans to achieve excellence in our schools will be to implement regular competency testing of teachers. We cannot take credit for coming up with this idea. It dates back to the previous government's Royal Commission on Education, which was endorsed by both the government of the day and the official opposition.

The idea at the root of teacher testing is to assure parents that the time and effort teachers spend refreshing and upgrading their skills will make a difference in the classroom. Continuous professional development for teachers is vital.

To give our children, and my kindergarten-aged grandson, a higher quality education, we need to set standards, then measure progress. The only way to measure progress is to test.

In addition to mandatory teacher recertification, student testing on core subjects will be developed for each grade. Schools that do not meet the minimum standards will be required to develop and implement turnaround plans.

I've enjoyed a very busy summer here at Queen's Park and in my riding of Scarborough Centre. I know the gardeners and the tourists who tend and appreciate our beautiful grounds have welcomed it. But I am sure that we all remember the various, shall I say, impromptu picnics that occurred here and elsewhere, featuring colourful flags and signs.

While we do respect and take into account the views of individuals who feel strongly enough to take their case directly to us at Queen's Park and elsewhere, I always remember that it is not only on their behalf that we serve.

My caucus colleagues and I also work on behalf of the people who, by and large, don't attend protests. That's because it is they who pay the price when we shrink from carrying out our commitments.

These are the people who work a full day, pay their taxes, respect our laws, and pull their weight in our communities. They are our communities. In Scarborough Centre, they're the residents of North Bendale, Maryvale, Wexford, and dozens of neighbourhoods like them.

Today, I rededicate myself to them and, as we did in our throne speech in 1995, to the restoration of hope and prosperity in Ontario—to the Common Sense Revolution. I also rededicate myself to those goals which I believe all Ontarians share, though we may differ in how we achieve them: excellent education, dependable health care, the dignity that comes from a job, safe communities, a decent standard of living and hope and opportunity for all.

1610

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey): It's a pleasure for me to rise today to second the motion in response to the speech from the throne. I of course

echo the comments from the member from Scarborough Centre with respect to her comments this week.

I would like to commence today by thanking the voters of Ontario, the voters who placed their confidence in this government for a second mandate, who support our policies, our plans for the future, which is exactly, of course, what the throne speech is all about: a plan for the future.

The throne speech essentially repeats exactly what was put forward in our platform during the election, and we're going to do as we said we were, exactly as we did in 1995. We will continue our efforts to restore jobs, hope and opportunity and growth to Ontario. We will work to make Ontario the best place to work in North America and to raise a family in North America.

I want to thank specifically the people who elected me in my riding of Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey. This is the third time that the people of that area have placed their trust in me and I'm certainly grateful and humbled by the support they have given to me. I want to let them know that they can count on me to continue to represent them and their interests here in this place to the best of my ability.

I want to also congratulate all the new members who have been elected to this place on all sides of the House. I can tell you, this is a great place to work. It's a great place to express your views.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): Speak for yourself.

Mr Tilson: The member over here has asked me to speak for myself. We'll let him explain that to his constituents. I, quite frankly, enjoy this place. I enjoy doing the work here. I enjoy working with my constituents.

I welcome all those new members here and I know that they will serve the people of their respective ridings and the people of Ontario with honour and distinction.

I also want to congratulate those members of the 36th Parliament of Ontario who either did not run or were defeated in the last election, again from all sides of this House. For me, it was a pleasure to work with them and I'm hopeful that our paths will cross again.

With respect to my remarks on the throne speech, I want to build on the comments made by my colleague the member for Scarborough Centre. She has made a great case for this government's agenda, and I heartily second not only her motion but her words today.

The speech from the throne proved, as many of my Conservative colleagues will no doubt say, that the revolutionary spirit that inspired this government in its first term is alive today in our second term. We're going to continue doing what we did in 1995. We're going to continue putting this province back in the place that it should be and is, in fact, now.

I was proud to be elected to implement the changes of the Common Sense Revolution. I'm proud we did the things that we said we would do. Person after person, whatever their political stripe, has said one thing about this government, one thing about the Premier of Ontario:

We have said and done exactly as we said we would do. We said it and we did it.

However, there's still much more to be done to help Ontarians better their lives. The throne speech outlines some of the measures that we plan to continue this work. Our work in these areas is no way complete. We have more work to do. The member for Scarborough Centre has made very good points in her speech. She has offered many good reasons for members to support this speech.

In my remarks I want to anticipate some of the things that we will likely hear from the Leader of the Opposition and some of his caucus colleagues over the course of the debate on the speech from the throne. I'm sure my colleagues and I will soon hear from this leader and his caucus about health care, about education and about tax cuts. It will be interesting to hear what their alternative is to the plan this government has put forward in this throne speech and whether his plan has changed, if he indeed had a plan during the election campaign.

We have nothing to be ashamed about when it comes to these issues and I'm proud today to talk about these issues in light of the throne speech.

With respect to health care, I know that the Leader of the Opposition and his colleagues will want to talk about health care. Health care is important. In my riding, and I know all ridings across this great province, of all the issues that people are concerned with, health care is certainly at the top of that list. It is vital to the well-being of Ontarians. Ontarians look to their provincial government to make sure that the health care services are in place when and where people need them. We agree with the people. We believe that health care is important. We believe health care is so important that we're spending more on health care than any other provincial government in the history of Ontario. We believe that health care is so important that we're working with all of our partners in health care—the professions, hospitals, everyone—to make sure the vital services are in place where and when people need them.

Her Honour, in the speech from the throne, reported to us several measures that the government plans to take in order to improve health care. Coming from my riding of Wellington-Dufferin—my riding of Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey—it's hard to change the name, Mr Speaker. I've got two more names on it and it's hard to get on to that.

Coming from a riding that has a mix of small urban and rural communities, I know the challenges that face many Ontarians, especially outside of Toronto, when it comes to getting a local family doctor. That's why the government promised a new initiative to offer medical students free tuition for medical school if they commit to relocating and practising in an underserviced area for five years after graduation. That's a pretty generous offer. Students are concerned about where they're going to get funds to be educated. We're prepared to do that. All they have to do is make a commitment to work in an underserviced area in this great province.

We will make a real difference to the lives of Ontarians. This is an idea most Ontarians can get behind. As a relatively recent father myself—I have a young daughter who is now 16 months—

Applause.

Mr Tilson: Thank you very much. It was my pleasure and continues to be my pleasure.

I know first-hand the particular importance of obstetric care and so does this government. That's why we're implementing a plan that will ensure that new mothers have a guaranteed 60-hour stay in hospital after birth.

This government's health policy is always focused beyond the dollars in the system. Health care funding is important, but there is more to health care than that. We have worked to improve services and to use health care funds more wisely because we want to see health care dollars spent where they are needed most, and that's on patient care. With this in mind, the speech from the throne promises a Patients' Bill of Rights that protects patients' rights to access health services and to complete information about their health, to respect for their privacy, personal dignity and safety. This is part of an important and ongoing effort to make health care more accountable and focused on the needs of some of the patients.

I would like to make a few comments with respect to my riding of Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey—I think I finally got it. Our community believed in the benefits of health care restructuring. It actually started back when the New Democratic government was in office, and we have restructured our hospitals in their reign. We were one of the first areas to restructure under their guidance.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Broadview-Greenwood): You must feel there's a problem if you're giving us credit.

Mr Tilson: We did exactly as we said, and it has proven to be a wonderful thing in our community.

Mr Christopherson: Come and make that speech in Hamilton.

Mr Tilson: The member says, "Come and make that speech in Hamilton." I'm telling you, when he was in government, he had no problem telling the people in my riding to restructure our hospitals, and we did exactly that and it has proven to be an efficient system and one of the best in Ontario.

As a result of that restructuring, Headwaters Health Care Centre opened in 1995, a brand new hospital in Orangeville, while the two institutions it replaced became long-term-care and chronic care facilities. The old hospital in Orangeville, the Dufferin Areas Hospital, was taken over by the Lord Dufferin Centre, which recently celebrated its first year in operation. It has transferred the aging Orangeville hospital into a retirement village, completely renovated the place, and it's now a wonderful facility, which I would recommend all of you come to if you want to see what to do with that type of facility when it's no longer of use. The lower level also houses a medical clinic, a pharmacy and a retail gift outlet for the tenants and citizens of Orangeville.

1620

This new hospital, the Headwaters Health Care Centre, is state of the art, complete with new dialysis facilities. Our citizens no longer have to go to Toronto, to Brampton, to Mississauga to receive dialysis.

We received approval from the Ministry of Health in May of 1999 to purchase a CAT scanner, which is a computerized axial tomography scanner, and the community is currently rallying around the hospital to raise the funds they need for the purchase of this equipment. This hospital is constantly developing new ways to work with other hospitals and to discover the best and more efficient ways to serve the community. More important, this hospital has managed to achieve all of this while also balancing its books this year.

I challenge all of you who are criticizing our government for the way restructuring has taken place to look at the facilities in our riding, because we've proven it can work, that restructuring can work and you can still have a top-flight hospital in your community.

I would like to refer to a few comments with respect to education. Our schools have been the subject of many debates in the last few years, and it has always been the commitment of our Premier and our caucus that education must meet the needs of our young people and prepare for the challenges of the 21st century.

The speech from the throne helps move towards this goal in several important ways. One of the goals of this government's education policy, indeed for all our policies, is to increase accountability. Accountability is especially important in education. Taxpayers need to know where their tax dollars are going and that they are being spent wisely. All Ontarians need to know that education resources are focused where they're needed: in the classroom. Our parents need to know how well our schools are educating our children. More information in the hands of parents will allow them to make decisions about their children's education. That's why the new, easily understandable report card is so important and, might I add, so popular with parents. That's why this government is determined to ensure that we have an effective system of testing the abilities of our teachers on a regular and ongoing basis.

In this House, we are alone in our belief. The Leader of the Opposition has indulged in all sorts of elegant statements to cloud where he stands on this issue. The people of Ontario should make no mistake: The Leader of the Opposition—that's Mr McGuinty—opposes teacher testing, and he has said so many times. But this hasn't always been the case, and I'd like to just talk about some of the flip-flopping ideas of the Leader of the Opposition with respect to this topic of teacher testing.

In February of 1995—he wasn't yet leader then—when the NDP's Royal Commission on Learning proposed mandatory teacher recertification, he told a community paper from his riding, "I am generally pleased with the report from the Royal Commission on Learning in that it recognizes the need to return to a core curriculum, standardized testing, enhanced teacher edu-

cation"—that is, mandatory recertification—"and more community involvement in local schools."

That's what he said five years ago. Those were the words of the member for Ottawa South. In fact, when his colleague the member for Fort William, who was then leader of her party, set forth the Liberal position for the 1995 election, you know what she said about teacher testing? This is what she said—allow me to quote the Ontario Liberal plan. Many of us know this of course as the red book. That was the party's plan back in those days. This is what it says, in case you haven't read it over there: "As part of our plan for reforming elementary, secondary and post-secondary education, we will ... strengthen teacher education by doubling the length of the preparation program to two years and requiring teachers to upgrade their certification during their careers." Those were the words of the Liberals back in 1995, and that came from their notorious red book.

Interjection: "Testing."

Mr Tilson: It didn't say "testing." Give me a break.

What's the old saying? "Consistency is the hobgoblin of narrow minds." If that's the case the leader, the member for Ottawa South, is extremely broad-minded. In 1999 he started singing yet a different tune, a different philosophy. In his "20/20" platform from April of this year, Mr McGuinty had this to say about teacher testing: "All new teachers will be required to pass certification exams that test their knowledge of teaching techniques, ability to identify learning difficulties, and computer and science literacy." Already we're starting to see some changes in the leader of the Liberal Party.

He goes further. This is after the election. He changed his tune yet again, if you can believe it. He said, "Testing teachers does little to improve the quality of education." He said this to the London Free Press on September 23, 1999.

On September 4 this year—that's fairly recently—the National Post had this to report: "Dalton McGuinty, the province's Liberal leader, denounced the idea by saying, 'It's discriminatory and it has much more to do with hammering away at Mike Harris's'"—

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: With your indulgence, today I thought we were discussing the response to the speech from the throne and not debating or discussing the contents that are or are not in The 20/20 Plan. We have seen for the last 10 minutes the member reading from The 20/20 Plan instead of discussing exactly what we were intended to discuss in the House today, and that is the speech from the throne.

With your indulgence, Mr Speaker, I think the member should confine himself to debating in the House the contents of the speech from the throne, which have nothing at all to do with The 20/20 Plan, and I would like you to rule on that.

The Deputy Speaker: I was listening very carefully to the member who had the floor and was speaking. I found that he was addressing the issues as nearly

perfectly as anyone could. I think he was staying within the framework of the—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: I'm not in a position to debate it. I just made my ruling. The Speaker recognizes the member for Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey.

Mr Tilson: I regret if it's getting the Liberals a little excited, but these are facts as to where their leader is going.

It's quite clear that the parents of Ontario can't count on the Leader of the Opposition to bring in much-needed teacher testing. The parents of Ontario can, however, count on this government to do so. We said we're going to do it and we're going to do it. All parents, all taxpayers can count on this government to make our schools more effective and accountable.

I would like to comment on my riding. I'm quite proud of some of the things that have been happening in my riding. We've had a new elementary public school of Laurelwoods, which was constructed last year in the township of Amaranth in my riding, which is a beautiful facility. There's a new secondary public school called St Benedict, of which I had the honour of attending the blessing just last week. It too is a beautiful facility which the students are enjoying. Next month I will be attending the official opening of a new public secondary school in the town of Orangeville as well.

I will say that the funding that is going on with respect to education in my riding is working and I believe that will be the same across this great province.

1630

I would now like to talk about the Liberals' favourite, tax cuts. That's the one they love the most. Certainly one of the hallmarks of the Mike Harris government has been tax cuts. We did what we said we were going to in 1995, and we're going to do what we said we would do this year in the election in June 1999.

For all of you Liberals who don't want to cut taxes, you're just like your federal cousins. You don't want to cut taxes. I'm looking forward to hearing the alternative from the Liberal government when they start talking about all the wonderful programs they're going to implement. Where in the world are they going to get the money?

I assume that what they're going to do if they get into office is raise taxes. In her remarks my colleague the member for Scarborough Centre was quite right to point out that the mere idea of tax cuts was revolutionary when we introduced the Common Sense Revolution. I remember the members of the New Democratic Party when they were in government, and the Liberal Party, just scoffed at that. They said it couldn't be done.

We did it and the people of Ontario liked what they saw. They re-elected us and they want more of what has happened, and that's what we're going to do.

As a result of these tax cuts, over 500,000 new jobs have been created in Ontario since our first throne speech in 1995. The Blueprint from the last election offered more tax cuts to Ontario. In the speech from the throne,

Her Honour made it clear that the government plans a further 20% reduction in personal income tax. The government will also implement a 20% cut to the provincial portion of residential property taxes. We have already implemented 10% of that.

These are important measures for the success of the economy of this province to create jobs and a better environment for all of us in Ontario.

Hard-working Ontarians should be able to keep more of their own hard-earned money to spend, save and invest as they see fit. This is a proposition that this government and the Conservative caucus are dedicated to. If only the federal Liberal government would see the light—of course we don't know where their cousins here stand on these issues—and cut federal taxes as well.

The concern is that we are still one of the highest-taxed jurisdictions in the world—

Interjection.

Mr Tilson: Oh, give me a break. That's absolute nonsense.

Like many Ontarians, I wish that our federal Liberal government would get the message that tax cuts are needed.

As we discuss the throne speech commitment to tax cuts, again I'd like to talk about what the Leader of the Opposition has said with respect to tax cuts, because I'm sure we're going to hear him talk about it in the days ahead. I am quite sure that the Liberal leader and some of his colleagues will rise and speak on this issue with respect to the throne speech.

When Mr McGuinty was running for the leadership of his party, the member for Ottawa South said, "No, I am not in favour of a tax break." That's what he said, and this is in the Kitchener-Waterloo Liberal leadership debate on September 22, 1996. A year later, on May 6, 1997, he told a news conference: "Wouldn't have a tax cut. Couldn't afford a tax cut." That's what he said in 1997.

Then, in the North Bay Nugget, he said, "I wouldn't give you a tax cut." That's what he said on July 29, 1997. Then, on Focus Ontario on August 15, 1998, he said, "I'm not the tax cut guy." That's what he said.

What are his true thoughts on tax cuts, you may ask. He said: "Tax cuts are a cheap political fix....There's more to life than tax cuts." He said that just recently—October 19, 1999.

As we've seen on other issues, the leader of the Liberal Party is not as consistent in his message. Now, time will tell.

This is another quote from him. He said on April 14, 1999, "Time will tell if we will supply a tax cut in the second year of our mandate." That's what he told the Liberals at his own nomination meeting in Ottawa South on April 14, 1999.

He then told the Hamilton radio host Roy Green, "We'll be able to provide significant tax relief in the second year of our mandate." So he's now getting into another theory: It's the second year of our mandate. Do

you know when that is? If he ever gets elected, that's eons away.

Interjection: It's 20/20.

Mr Tilson: It's 20/20.

Speaking at London's Labatt Park in the midst of the election campaign, Mr McGuinty said, "Well, we're talking about, according to the government's economic projections, we're talking about a tax cut available in the third year." It's getting longer; it's in the third year. "So in our third year we'll have to put forward the money and talk about what we're going to do at that point in time."

I have no idea what that means, and my guess is his colleagues have no idea what it means. He's out of control.

Overall, I would say that the record I put forward today does not offer many encouraging signs from the Leader of the Opposition, Mr McGuinty. I would urge his colleagues, his fellow Liberals, to take a long and hard look at his positions, and frankly, where he stands with the people of Ontario.

I know it will not have escaped the notice of the members here that the latest survey from the pollster Angus Reid, released this morning, I believe, shows Mr McGuinty to be trailing his party in popular support. Too bad, I guess.

I also noted with interest, and I'm sure this will be of interest to the Liberal members, too, that the member for Ottawa South enjoys the least support of any leader in this place.

Mr Sergio: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I believe that we are here to inform the people of what the government does or doesn't do. We are here today to speak on the speech from the throne delivered in this House, not to read polls. I am quite surprised that the member is taking considerable time to read from some polling done on behalf of the Conservative Party instead of addressing the values and the merits of the speech from the throne. I have to say that the reason they are resorting to that is they have an empty speech from the throne and they have nothing to tell the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): That's not a point of order, so the member can continue.

Mr Tilson: Some 48% of Ontarians disagree with their leader. That's the fact.

If I can borrow a phrase from the election campaign, Ontarians have taken a cold, hard look at the Leader of the Opposition and found that he is simply not up to the job.

Mr Speaker, in conclusion, I must note that the speech from the throne is—

Interjection.

Mr Tilson: I'd talk longer, but I'm not allowed to; it's almost over.

This speech from the throne is clearly infused with the spirit of revolutionary change that marked our first mandate. We're going to continue to do what we have been doing. It offers a clear vision to lead Ontario to a brighter future with greater prosperity for all.

As I have noted today, the speech delivers needed changes in important areas. As I have contended here today, the opposition will have little to offer Ontarians in important areas such as health care, education and tax cuts. It remains to be seen, but I don't think you're going to hear anything from the opposition with respect to those three very important areas.

Only the strong, principled leadership of Mike Harris will lead Ontario into a new century. I believe the speech from the throne has demonstrated such leadership. I'm pleased to have had this opportunity to address the Legislature today and express my support and second the speech from the throne.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): I move adjournment of the debate.

The Acting Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Orders of the day.

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Solicitor General): Mr Speaker, pursuant to the order of the House passed earlier today, I move we adjourn the House until 6:30 this evening.

The Acting Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The House stands adjourned until 6:30 of the clock this evening.

The House adjourned at 1642.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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 Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Gary Carr
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		York South-Weston / York-Sud-Weston	Duncan, Dwight (L)
		York West / -Ouest	Kwinter, Monte (L)
			Munro, Julia (PC)
			Cordiano, Joseph (L)
			Sergio, Mario (L)

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premiers et derniers numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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of Ontario

First Session, 37th Parliament

Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario

Première session, 37^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Monday 25 October 1999

Lundi 25 octobre 1999

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 25 October 1999

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 25 octobre 1999

The House met at 1830.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

INTERIM SUPPLY

CRÉDITS PROVISOIRES

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education): I move that the Minister of Finance be authorized to pay the salaries of the civil servants and other necessary payments pending the voting of supply for the period commencing November 1, 1999, and ending April 30, 2000. Such payments to be charged to the proper appropriation following the voting of supply.

Mr Speaker, I would like to advise you that the time for the government members will be split between Mr Skarica from Wentworth-Burlington, Mr Dunlop from Simcoe North and Mr Gill from Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): On a point of order, Mr Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): The member for Timmins-James Bay.

Mr Bisson: I'm so used to being called the member for Cochrane South. It's going to take some adjustment.

I would ask that we split the time equally among the three caucuses in the debate that we have tonight.

The Acting Speaker: You're asking for unanimous consent. Do we have unanimous consent to split the time evenly between the caucuses? Agreed.

Mr Toni Skarica (Wentworth-Burlington): Interim supply is one of the most important motions that is passed in the Legislature. It is the motion that gives authority for the government to continue its programs and operate the daily business of government: to send money to municipalities and hospitals, to pay social assistance benefits to those in need and to appropriate the payment of salaries to the dedicated members of Ontario's civil service.

The motion for interim supply does not specify a dollar amount but provides spending authority for a specified period of time. The proposed motion for interim supply would cover the six-month period from November 1, 1999, to April 30, 2000. Currently, a special warrant is in effect to provide global and individual ministry spending authority to continue the job we have been

elected to do, and you heard that vision last week in the speech from the throne.

What is that vision? Our vision is that the people of Ontario have asked us to implement a plan that builds on the achievements of the last four years and takes us further down the road to a better Ontario. It is a plan to cut taxes and to cut taxes again and again, another 30 times this year, for a total of 99 times in the last five years. It is a plan to spend 20% more on health care by the year 2004. It is a plan that guarantees education funding. It is a plan to get more welfare recipients off the sidelines and into employment. As you know, since this government was elected in 1995, over 400,000 people have come off welfare. It is a plan to make our streets, our homes and our schools safer.

We are fortunate to be starting from a very healthy position, unlike four years ago. After four years of hard work on everyone's part, Ontario is back on track. Ontarians lead Canada in job creation. We lead the industrialized world in growth. Here are some facts: Our projected economic growth this year is expected to be 3.7%. In fact, the private sector estimates it to be much higher. Jobs are up 560,000 since September 1995. The unemployment rate is down to 7%. Consumer confidence has rocketed by 43% since the end of 1995. Housing starts are up 19% so far in 1999 compared to the same period in 1998. In fact, there will be more housing starts this year and next year, the most starts in a 10-year period.

All this good news did not happen by accident, and it certainly won't continue by accident. The foundation of our success in protecting the priority programs we and our loved ones rely on is a strong and growing economy. There can be no advances in health care and no education standards for our children without the tax dollars to pay for them.

Tax cuts have helped us to cement the new economic foundation. The debate is over. Tax cuts create jobs. That's why we've cut taxes 69 times in the last four years and another 30 times this year. We estimate we will create 825,000 more jobs with these new tax cuts. You should have seen the first cut already in your final property tax bill. In our last budget we cut the provincial share of the education property tax by 10%. We will cut this tax by 20% in total. On July 1, Ontario's personal income tax rate was cut by 5%, from 40.5% to 38.5% of the basic federal tax. This is the first instalment of a new 20% cut in personal income tax to be phased in over five years.

The last four years have dramatically shown the positive effect of cutting personal income tax and the subsequent positive effect this has had on our economy, which has resulted in more tax revenue to the government and not less, and that's an issue I would like to address.

During the last campaign, and in fact in this House over the last four years, we heard time and time again from the opposition: "Your tax cuts are going to the rich. You're cutting programs to pay for tax cuts for the rich." That was said in 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998 and 1999. It was said but it had no basis in fact. That is why we were re-elected and the opposition continues to sit on the other side of the House.

As I indicated, in 1996, 1997, 1998 and 1999, we heard the same mantra from the opposition, "You have to cut programs to pay for your tax cut." But the truth of the matter is that nothing had to pay for the tax cut. The actual facts—and I am referring to the 1999 Ontario budget papers—

Interjections.

Mr Skarica: Traditionally, in the last four years when I've been in the House, when the real facts start to come out, the heckling starts on the other side because they just don't want to face up to the facts. The facts are simply that our tax cuts were self-funding and provided extra revenues to the government. For example, in 1995-96—and unlike the government we took over from, this is audited, this is accurate, there are no two sets of books. This is the only set of books that are kept.

What are the actual totals of taxation revenue in Ontario since the tax cuts? When we took over in 1995-96 there was \$36 billion in revenue. The tax cuts started to be implemented. The next year, \$38.5 billion in revenue, a virtual \$2 billion increase in revenue. Not a single program had to be cut, nothing had to be cut. In fact, we made \$2 billion on the first phase of the tax cut.

In 1997-98, the budget papers show that the same thing happened the next year: \$38.5 billion in revenue went up to \$41.2 billion. I think it's a good thing to be kept in mind, as I look over at the other side—the last time I didn't, actually, I sat on the other side in the rump and had the good fortune to look at all my fellow colleagues over here, but I don't this time around.

Each and every one of those tax cuts was opposed on the basis that, yes, you're doing tax cuts—they were surprised we did it because in the past the government said one thing and did another, but we did do the tax cuts. After they overcame that surprise, they opposed the tax cuts, saying, "You're cutting education, you're cutting health care, you're cutting virtually everything in government to pay for a tax cut to the most wealthy." But lo and behold, nothing had to pay for the tax cut and we were making money on it, which wasn't a surprise to us because we did research in other jurisdictions and found that the same thing happened there. The more you cut taxes, the more economic growth there was in your economy.

So \$41 billion in 1997-98. Our reaction to that almost \$5 billion in increased revenue was, "Maybe we should

keep cutting taxes more," and so we did. In 1998-99, we got almost another \$1.5 billion in revenue, to \$42.5 billion. The bottom line is that when we went into the election, we had an extra \$6 billion in revenue because of the 30% cut in taxes. How did that happen? Was that an accident? Was it a fluke? Was it good luck? No, it wasn't. It was very simple: We cut taxes, people invested in Ontario and that created jobs, 570,000 at this point. Those people paid taxes, and those taxes went to the Ontario and federal governments. As a result, we got more revenue, people got more jobs and 400,000 people came off welfare.

Interjection.

Mr Skarica: The only response you have—and I heard it just now, and I heard it during the election—is, "You increased the debt." Yes, we increased the debt, but we started off with an \$11-billion or \$12-billion deficit. We couldn't cut it overnight, nobody could. It's instructive to go back—

Interjections.

Mr Skarica: Why did we increase the debt?

Interjections.

Mr Skarica: It is a good question. There were two reasons. You can't cut \$11 billion out of a budget without affecting education and health care.

Let's take a look at health care and education spending. Again, I go back to the budget papers. Remember, that was the mantra: "You're cutting health care to pay for the tax cut to the rich." That was said in 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, and the real facts of the matter were irrelevant.

1840

Looking at the actual facts, again audited—I'm not making it up—the fact of the matter is that in health care we spent—

Interjections.

Mr Skarica: I know you don't want to hear the facts, but the public does.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order.

Mr Skarica: In health care we spent \$17.6 billion in 1995, \$17.7 billion in 1996, \$18.2 billion in 1997-98 and almost \$19 billion in 1998-99. So we increased health care spending by \$1.5 billion. We did the same thing in education. So now your only defence is, "You've increased the debt." Yes, we did. We had a situation we had to deal with, an \$11-billion deficit.

Let's see how the prior government dealt with the deficit. When the NDP government sat there—and you can see what happened to them. If you look over there, there's no one there. Even if they're all there, there's almost no one there. I remember one time when there was no one in the House from a party, we brought a motion for consent that they not be allowed any questions in question period, but since they narrowly escaped that bullet, I won't bring that motion now.

When the NDP took over in 1990-91, they had a deficit of \$3 billion, which, by the way, is higher than what we've got now. They had a problem: The economy was

slowing down a bit. If they had looked at other jurisdictions, when that happens what you do is you cut taxes and you control spending, and what happens is that you can bring the economy back. That happened in other jurisdictions, so that the impact of the recession was virtually minimal. In fact, some jurisdictions during the 1990-95 period made money.

But what did the NDP do? They raised taxes and increased government spending to the point where it was \$10 billion in their second year, \$12 billion in 1992-93, \$11 billion in 1993-94 and \$10 billion when we took over in 1994-95. Every year since then we've decreased that deficit, to the point where we're going to have a balanced budget. We did that, and at the same time we were cutting taxes, increasing government revenues and spending more money on education and health care. That was the responsible thing to do.

I can tell already that the opposition mantra this time around is that we're arrogant. That's what you're going to hear. We heard in 1995, without any basis in fact, "You're going to cut government programs to pay for the tax cut." The real facts were irrelevant. Now the mantra is: "You guys are now arrogant." That's going to be said time and time again. Again, that's not going to bear any relation to the facts.

You want some examples? One of the other reasons we had such tremendous and dramatic growth in our economy is that we got rid of red tape, thousands and thousands of regulations. The person involved with that was my very good friend and former seat mate—kept me entertained for four years—Frank Sheehan, who was the chairman of the red tape regulations. After the election—he was not re-elected—what was Frank's reaction? It's pretty reflective of the dedication and commitment of the government members who took over in 1995, and virtually all of them came back in 1999. He basically said: "I want to continue on. I'll do it for a dollar a year." And that's a Canadian dollar he's taking. A dollar a year he's doing it for. That shows the level of commitment of our members.

My 20 minutes are up. I want to conclude and summarize in this way: In 1995, the members of this House took over a government that was bankrupt, that had massive deficits. We embarked on a bold, bold program of tax cuts, which stimulated the economy. We got people off welfare; we got them working. We increased government revenues. That created a very strong economy that has allowed us to spend more money on vital programs such as health care and education.

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): It is an honour and a privilege to rise today to speak for the first time in this magnificent building.

I stand here to support the motion for interim supply. Interim supply is one of the most important motions that is passed in this Legislature. It is the motion that gives authority for the government to continue its programs, operate the daily business of government and to appropriate the payment of the salaries to the dedicated members of Ontario's civil service.

I stand here as one of seven new members who have joined the Mike Harris team, a team that has restored confidence in the Ontario economy, a team that has made difficult but necessary decisions, a team that has put Ontario back on track, a team that made promises and kept those promises, a team whose work has only just begun and a team that will continue to lead Ontario as the economic engine that will drive the Canadian economy into the new millennium.

Mr Speaker, I want to congratulate you on your recent election to such an honourable position. Your constituents in the riding of Oakville should be very proud of your accomplishments. You have a challenge facing you over the next five years in that you must assure the citizens of Ontario that order and fairness will prevail in this great assembly.

A special thank you to Mr Tilson for also allowing his name to stand.

I am humbled to be included in a region of Ontario with such high-profile and competent members as Finance Minister Eves to the north, Management Board Chair Hodgson to the east, Energy, Science and Technology Minister Wilson to the west and consumer watchdog chair Joe Tascona to the south. I am honoured to have you as neighbours.

I would like to congratulate all others who were elected to this great assembly in June. It is a privilege to be able to serve the people of this great province.

The new riding of Simcoe North includes large portions of two former ridings. I want to thank our former colleagues for their service to our province.

Mr Allan McLean served as the member for Simcoe East for 18 years and served the township of Oro and the county of Simcoe another 17 years: a total contribution of 35 years in the political arena.

Mr Bill Grimmett served as the member for Muskoka-Georgian Bay in the Harris government until June 1999. His contributions were invaluable. Mr Grimmett is continuing his law practice and is residing with his family and practising law in Muskoka, at Port Carling.

I would like to spend a few moments and briefly describe my riding. Simcoe North is made up of the municipal governments of the city of Orillia, the towns of Midland and Penetanguishene, the townships of Tiny, Tay, Severn, Ramara, Oro-Medonte and a portion of Springwater, and two First Nation settlements, Beausoleil First Nation on Christian Island and the Chippewas of Mingikining at Rama.

Included in my riding is the only French-Canadian community in central Ontario. It is centrally located in the Lafontaine-Penetanguishene area of my riding. We are all proud that the French heritage has survived and is alive and well in schools, the media and in the business community.

The permanent population of Simcoe North is approximately 115,000 people.

My family resides in the Coldwater area and has done so for many generations.

The riding is very diverse. Employment is concentrated in tourism, agriculture, small manufacturing and the service industry.

Our hospitals include the Huronia District Hospital in Midland, the Penetanguishene General Hospital and the Orillia Soldiers' Memorial Hospital. We are proud that Soldiers' Memorial in Orillia is the lead dialysis centre for the region, as well as having a level 2 perinatal program, often accommodating unhealthy babies both regionally and from across the province.

We are fortunate to have the presence of Georgian College, with campuses in both Midland and Orillia.

We are home to the Ontario Provincial Police headquarters in Orillia.

The new superjail is under construction in Penetanguishene, and we expect to see it in operation in the fall of 2000. The jail is located adjacent to the Penetanguishene Mental Health Centre. The riding of Simcoe North is also home to the only youth correction camp in Ontario. The success of Project Turnaround will be a reason to expand the service in the future.

My riding is home to Casino Rama, the largest tourist attraction in central Ontario. The casino has created thousands of jobs for citizens throughout our region. The future of the casino will see it marketed as a regional destination, as there are currently plans to add a major hotel and entertainment complex to the main structure.

I, for one, was very pleased to see that the Premier had set aside the week of November 8 as a constituency week. I have nine Legions and 12 Remembrance Day and Memorial Day services that I am represented at over a three-week period. I am pleased that our government has not forgotten the significance of Canadians who sacrificed their lives so that we can live in a democratic society.

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The riding of Simcoe North is geographically one of the more beautiful ridings in Ontario. Lake Simcoe, Lake Couchiching, Georgian Bay and the Severn River, along with numerous smaller lakes, account for almost 500 kilometres of shoreline in Simcoe North. A number of Canada's largest marinas are located on this shoreline, particularly in the harbours of Midland, Penetanguishene and Victoria Harbour. The shoreline is also home to magnificent resorts, campgrounds, four provincial parks and thousands of seasonal residents. Some of our 16 beautiful golf courses also abut the shoreline.

The scenic hills of Oro-Medonte are home to two of the most popular ski resorts in Ontario, Mt St Louis-Moonstone and Horseshoe Valley resort, both under expansion at the current time. As well, the hills of Oro-Medonte contain some of the richest sand and gravel deposits in our province.

While mentioning aggregate, the eastern end of our riding contains thousands of acres of deposits of limestone in the Severn and Ramara township areas. Without question, there will be extreme pressure to further develop these aggregate resources as our province grows to prosperity.

I am proud to say that my family has resided in what is now Simcoe North since the early 1800s. They have been a family known for their work ethic. My parents, Glen and Marie Dunlop, were married shortly after the Second World War. They built a successful construction business, raised six children and never asked for or received any government assistance in their lives. They believed then, and still believe today, that hard work and common sense will reward you with the lifestyle that you expect. In fact, in the early 1960s they purchased a farm so that we would have chores to do after school and on the weekend and not be hanging around the streets. I thank my parents for the gift of educating me to be a decent person.

As a teenager and young adult growing up, I never imagined that I would even dream about running for a municipal position, let alone seek a provincial seat. In 1980, friends and neighbours convinced me to run for a seat on the village of Coldwater council. I enjoyed the community element of municipal politics and stayed on council until June 3 of this year, while at the same time managing our family business.

During my years on council I became increasingly frustrated with the political system. Year after year we would see school boards issue tax levies with double-digit inflation while our enrolment would increase 2% or 3%. We would see bureaucracy balloon, red tape increase dramatically and legislation delivered that always cost the taxpayers more in the end.

The very same frustrations occurred in the business community. By 1992, our province had reached an annual deficit of \$9 billion. The construction industry was all but dead, and Ontario was no longer the engine that drove the Canadian economy. We had reached a point where business was leaving our province to jurisdictions that would encourage investment.

In 1993, I had the opportunity to listen to Mike Harris speak about something he called the Common Sense Revolution. I was very impressed. Everything he talked about made common sense to me. The idea of actually cutting taxes to stimulate the economy was such an innovative idea for the province that I became sceptical. He promised change, but almost all governments had promised change in the past and only partially delivered.

Mike Harris formed a majority government and was elected Premier in June 1995. The next four years are now history, and there's one thing for sure that we will always remember: Never in the history of any government in Canada has a government been elected that made as many promises and kept them.

In February 1999, I was offered an opportunity to seek the nomination to run as a candidate for the Harris team. It was one of the most difficult decisions I have ever made. It does mean a complete adjustment to your lifestyle. At exactly the same time we were trying to decide my future in politics, our daughter, Jill, and her husband, Derek, were blessed with a baby daughter, Rachel. For those of you here who have children, I hope that you will get the same satisfaction and fulfilment from having a

grandchild as Jane and I have had, although you could put off being grandparents until your 50s or 60s.

After the birth of our grandchild, we decided that if I could help Mike Harris make a difference in making Ontario a better place to live, then I would work hard to win the nomination and the election, and therefore become a member of this Legislature.

I was able to win the election, and I am proud to serve the constituents of Simcoe North. The people of Simcoe North are warm, friendly and very active in their communities. We are only five months into the mandate, but I want to assure my constituents that I love the job.

Our government campaigned on Blueprint: Mike Harris' Plan to Keep Ontario on the Right Track. During the election, we made a number of further commitments to the citizens of Ontario. As I listened to Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario deliver the throne speech last Thursday, I was pleased to see that as a government we are not about to become stagnant, arrogant or complacent. Rather, we are informing the citizens of Ontario that the work has only just begun. Yes, there is more to do. As indicated in the throne speech, although our economy is strong, Ontario must keep attracting investment, Ontario must keep cutting taxes, Ontario must continue to promote consumer confidence and Ontario must become more competitive. These factors will build an even stronger economy, and only with a strong economy can we afford the health and education spending that the citizens of this great province deserve and expect.

Attracting investment. There can be no argument that we live in a world economy. Investors around the world have information on business opportunities at the tips of their fingers. Government, like business, must be more efficient and streamlined if we are to succeed in the 21st century.

Cutting taxes. As we have repeated many times over the past few months, the argument is over; cutting taxes does create jobs. As promised in our platform Blueprint, I am pleased to see that we have already initiated the first stage of a further 20% reduction in provincial personal income tax and a 20% reduction to the provincial portion of residential property taxes.

Our Premier is a strong leader, and that is a major reason why we are leading the nation in economic growth. He continues to battle our federal government for income tax cuts and employment insurance premium cuts. In my opinion, it is morally wrong for the federal government to budget for a surplus at the expense of Canadian taxpayers and the Canadian economy. I applaud our Premier for his stand-alone efforts and for his vision to build a competitive tax rate that will help protect the Ontario economy in the event of an economic downturn.

In the riding of Simcoe North, many of our business operators are associated with tourism. I was pleased to see the throne speech acknowledge Ontario as a natural tourist destination. The fact that our government will enhance marketing and tourist infrastructure will help our tourism operators market our area of the province as a destination.

Tourism operators throughout the province are pleased to see that the Premier has set up a separate ministry for tourism for the first time in history. I thank the Minister of Tourism for the keen interest he has developed in our riding. The minister, for example, visited the King's Wharf Theatre in Penetanguishene twice this past summer. The provincially owned facility has an operating agreement with the Drayton Festival Theatre. In a very short initial season, the Drayton Festival sold over 20,000 theatre tickets—a resounding public-private success story.

Fluctuating gas prices were certainly an issue in my riding these past few months. Our government has continually acknowledged this issue to be a federal responsibility. The Ottawa commitment to act by September 2000 is a welcome gesture, and I am pleased that our government will conduct our own review of gasoline pricing and share the results with the federal government. My neighbouring colleague from Simcoe-Brampton has worked very hard on this issue, and I thank him for his efforts.

I was pleased to see the throne speech acknowledge the important role agriculture plays in our provincial economy as well as the role it plays in my own riding. Historically, the farming community has been faced with a fluctuating and unreliable marketplace. Any attempt to keep Ontario farms and agribusinesses strong will be welcome.

I thank the Premier and Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs for drawing attention to the agriculture community by organizing caucus members to attend the International Plowing Match at Exeter and Foodland Ontario Week here at the Legislature.

In a riding with three hospitals and a high percentage of seniors, I was encouraged to see the statement: "Making sure that every person ... has access to top-quality health care is your government's most urgent concern." Although health care spending increased to an all-time high of \$18.9 billion in this province in 1999, and despite the \$2.8 billion in cuts by the federal government, the citizens of our province still expect the best efforts in maintaining high-quality health care.

As I mentioned earlier, my riding is the home of the OPP headquarters. I often have the opportunity to discuss policing with employees of the OPP. Our government leadership, in acknowledging the importance of public safety in our communities, is unprecedented in the history of government police services activity. I note that we have already placed 534 new front-line officers in the communities of Ontario and expect to have a total of 1,000 by the year 2000.

There are numerous topics covered in the throne speech that I would like to comment on, but we are on a time allocation.

I would like to close with one true story that best describes what our government is about. In my riding of Simcoe North, we have a manufacturing plant in Midland called Huronia Precision Plastics. They build plastic automotive parts using robotics. In 1994, they had four

employees. Today, in 1999, they have 100 high-tech employees, are selling their products worldwide and are in the process of doubling the size of their operations. Recently, they spent over \$3.5 million on new equipment purchased from a manufacturer in Guelph. The owners of this company are 32 and 36 years old.

The motion for interim supply does not specify a dollar amount but provides spending authority for a specified period of time. The proposed motion for interim supply would cover the six-month period from November 1, 1999, to April 30, 2000. By authorizing special warrants earlier this year, the government took the responsible action to ensure there is sufficient spending authority to cover general and necessary government expenditures, including social assistance payments and civil servants' salaries.

To ensure that all scheduled payment obligations are met and our vision for a renewed Ontario for the next century moves forward, the motion for interim supply must be passed. I appreciate the opportunity to stand before this assembly today, and I support the motion for interim supply.

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Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): I am proud to stand in this assembly and join in the debate on the interim supply motion—proud, humble and at the same time very conscious of the great responsibility the voters of Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale entrusted to me on June 3.

It has taken sustained exertion to get me to this chair, to this chamber and to this day. I can say with certainty that I intend to work just as hard to keep the trust of the people of Brampton and Malton. I am confident that my colleagues here on this side of the House share my commitment and determination to building a better Ontario.

I would like to begin, Mr Speaker, by offering you my personal congratulations on your election to the Legislative Assembly's highest office. You, sir, have the challenge of keeping this sometimes unruly House in order, a challenge which we all expect you will meet with great dexterity.

In addition, I would like to congratulate all members of the Legislature on their personal victories last June. I pledge to work with them to ensure that Ontario remains one of the world's best places to live, work and raise our families.

The people of Ontario made a courageous choice in 1995 when they elected Premier Mike Harris and endorsed our party's Common Sense Revolution. Last June the people of Ontario, in re-electing our party with a strong majority, reaffirmed their support for the decisions made by Premier Harris and his caucus and resoundingly endorsed the path Ontario was taking on the road to prosperity. It is no small wonder that the Common Sense Revolution has not only succeeded, but indeed its message is spreading.

Not only am I proud to serve as a member of the Conservative Party of Ontario, I am even more proud to serve under the strong and able leadership of Mike Harris. He

has shown admirable courage and dignity as our party's leader and as our Premier during the turbulent periods of change in Ontario.

Like the leadership of Lady Thatcher in Great Britain, our Premier chose not to turn from his set course. His strength and conviction have enabled him to guide this province back to prosperity despite constant doubting and derision from those opposing change.

I take it as a personal honour that Premier Harris has seen fit to appoint me as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Labour, the Honourable Chris Stockwell. I wish the House to know that Mr Stockwell has been very supportive of me in my new role not only as a parliamentary assistant but also as a rookie member. I am grateful to him and to the other members of this chamber for their advice and support.

As the first member of South Asian decent elected to serve in the Ontario Legislature, I can state with pride that this is a great province and a great country. It is a splendid example of our inclusive democracy that any individual, irrespective of categorizations, can stand in this chamber and contribute to the making of laws which will benefit all Ontarians. In many countries around the world such a democratic privilege and honour is not permitted. It speaks well not only for the voters of Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale but for all Ontarians and Canadians that we do not merely speak of being an open and multicultural society; rather, we live it every day.

I would like to thank the voters in Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale for their support, both for myself as the member and through me their support of the government. I will endeavour over the life of the 37th Parliament to live up to the legitimate demands and concerns of all my constituents and have planned to meet and exceed their expectations.

Let me say, as a member of the government, we will keep our promises as outlined in the Blueprint during the election. We intend to follow through by creating more new jobs, improving our children's education, strengthening the health care system, and rest assured we will continue on our journey to restore hope and opportunity for both Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale and Ontario.

Permit me to pay tribute to my riding of Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale and to the city of Brampton. My riding is a wonderful representation of this province. As one travels the riding from Derry Road in the south to Mayfield in the north, you can see and feel the new optimism that is today's Ontario. New business development, new home construction and new neighbourhoods all indicate a brighter future for my riding.

Recently the city of Brampton celebrated its 25th anniversary, and our mayor, Peter Robertson, unveiled a plaque commemorating our city's population milestone of 307,000. Brampton continues to flourish both in population and in terms of attracting new businesses. Today Brampton stands as one of the fastest-growing cities in the GTA and in all of Canada.

Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale is a new riding, representing part of Mississauga, which is Malton, and in the north Bramalea, which is part of Brampton. At the same time, new areas of residential growth, such as Springdale and Gore, are further redefining my riding.

Less than five years ago Brampton elected two members of the Progressive Conservative Party to this chamber: the member from Brampton West-Mississauga, the Honourable Tony Clement; and the member from Brampton Centre, Mr Joe Spina. Today, as a clear indication of Brampton's rapid population growth and its support for Premier Harris, Bramptonians have three members in the provincial Legislature on the government side, speaking with a strong and unified voice. This is good news for the people of Brampton and for my riding.

1910

I would like to note that my riding of Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale is a very special place to me. My desire to run for office and to serve the people of Brampton can be traced back to my long involvement in the community and my personal desire to give back to the community and the province which has given so much to my family and me. Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale is the riding in which my father, Harpal Singh Gill, bought our first home when I was a teenager and where he and my mother, Pritam Kaur, raised our family and where they continue to reside in the same house.

I say with much pride that some 19 years ago at the Bramalea Lions Hall, situated within my riding, I was married to my wife, Dr Pam Gill, a family doctor in practice at Credit Valley Hospital and the mother of our two daughters, Natasha and Sonja. It is with the strength of my family and my conviction in God that I am endeavouring to fulfill my duties as best as I can.

I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak on the interim supply motion. As we all know, it is one of the most important motions that we pass in the House. This motion will allow the government to send funds to local municipalities such as Peel, to all our provincial hospitals and to local school boards across this province. In addition to paying for routine provincial expenditures, this motion will allow for the paying of salaries to our dedicated civil servants.

I approach the interim supply motion from the vantage point of one who has been educated in Ontario and is a small business owner who has had to meet weekly payrolls at my private business. Much like any entrepreneur, I recognize the double dangers of high taxes and bad management. Let me say to the members opposite, I've seen at close sight the danger when your governments mismanaged the resources entrusted to you by the people, and I've seen the damage Liberal and NDP governments have done to Ontario.

The voters in my riding voted against Liberal and NDP mismanagement in 1995, and they did it again in 1999. They voted for the strong, steady hand of a party and a Premier who, like them, understood that at the end of the day every household and every business must balance its books or face the prospect of real personal

and financial hardships. Voters in my riding voted to continue this government's record of job creation and tax cuts.

During the last election campaign, as I went from door to door, people kept telling me again and again that this government was on the right track. The facts are self-evident. More members of our families are finding meaningful work, more students are being challenged to do better in our classrooms, more communities are becoming safer from crime, and yes, more businesses are expanding and creating more jobs for ordinary Ontarians.

We have come a long way since the lost decade. I didn't mean last decade, I meant the lost decade. I'm sure we can all remember the days when the Liberals and the NDP held the reins of government. I know that many Ontarians would like to forget those dark, gloomy days. But try as we may, we're still haunted by the damage the members opposite inflicted on our provincial economy. I know that my colleagues opposite hate to face the truth, but face it they must.

I know that they remember the state of this province when they held the seat of power. Ontario, once the magnet of job creation, was in the grip of recession. Interest rates were in the double digits. Taxes were being levied recklessly on the hard-working men and women of this province, and Ontarians were rapidly losing faith in our province's future.

Between 1985 and 1995, Ontario became a drag on the nation. This great province, one of the four founders of Confederation, was in dire straits. Our finances were mismanaged, our businesses, the job-creating engine of our economy, were being over regulated by the socializing arm of government planners and regulators, and the resulting unemployment, family stress and economic hardships became far too familiar to many Ontarians. The average Ontario family soon found itself suffocating from the onerous burdens placed upon them by the government of the day.

Shockingly, in less than 10 years the Liberals and the NDP forced upon the hard-working families of this province 56 tax increases. We all know what happens when you strangle businesses and taxpayers: Job creation goes down the drain. During those dark days, too many people were looking for work; one in seven Ontarians was on welfare. Far too many people were worried about keeping their jobs, and at the same time many mothers and fathers were worried about their children's future. Those were the dark days to which we as a province must never return.

Over 550,000 net new jobs have been created since June 1995. Our provincial unemployment is among the lowest in Canada, and Ontario is not only leading the nation in net new jobs created; we are a leading choice in all of North America for new investments and new start-up businesses. Just ask Mayor Hazel McCallion of Mississauga or Mayor Peter Robertson of Brampton. Ontario is stronger today than it was five years ago.

My riding is a great example of Ontario's booming economy. Where once office space was sitting vacant,

today rental space is harder than ever to find. Major employers in my riding such as Chrysler and Canadian Tire are expanding, welfare rates are dropping, and at the same time new home construction is on the rise throughout Gore and Springdale.

A strong economy—and I don't have to explain to you, Mr Speaker; you know—means that more Ontario families will prosper. Ontarians will once again have hope, and individuals will again find new opportunities in the marketplace. This means financial security for families, stability in households, and yes, it also means a chance for everyone to take advantage of Ontario's booming economy. I'm confident that even the members opposite can identify friends and family members who are benefiting from the positive changes brought in by our government.

In order to continue the work of this government and our goal of returning hope and opportunity to every part of this province, I would urge all members to join with me in supporting this interim supply motion.

Mr Skarica: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: For the last hour, as I've pointed out, the NDP hasn't had anybody listening to the debate. Probably that's because they created the mess we were in in 1995. I wonder if we could have—

The Acting Speaker: That's not a point of order. Under what standing order is your point of order? You don't have one.

Further debate?

1920

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): Mr Speaker, I want to inform you that I'll be sharing my time with Mr Curling, Mr Bradley and Mr Crozier. I understand that's something you would like us to point out at the start.

I want to begin discussion on the supply motion by reminding ourselves of what has really been driving the Ontario economy. The reason I mention this is because if we don't understand it is exports that are driving the Ontario economy, we run the risk of making some significant mistakes. I found that perhaps the most interesting statement in the budget was on page 13, where it says, "The province's export orientation has increased sharply, rising from 27.5% of our gross domestic product in 1989 to 48.9% in 1998." In other words, it has gone up from roughly 27% 10 years ago to where almost half of Ontario's gross domestic product is now exports.

Make no mistake about it, it has been exports that have driven Ontario's economy. And why is that? In my opinion, it's because many of our auto companies have chosen to locate in Ontario. One of the key reasons for that is that we have a world-class health care system, heavily funded by our taxpayers. And what is Mike Harris doing? The percentage of health expenditures funded by all of us is dropping and we are moving more and more to a two-tiered health care system. I predict that will begin to impact on the companies that want to locate here in Ontario.

The second reason our exports have gone up is that we have a terrific workforce. Why is that? It is because we have invested, over the history of this province, in education. Again, what is Mike Harris doing? Cutting support for post-secondary education. Tuition has now gone from where students used to pay 20% of their cost to where they're now paying 35%, and Mike Harris says: "I love that. I'm proud of that." But we are changing the fundamental reason we have had a terrific workforce. It is because it is a well-educated workforce.

So I say let's not forget what has driven the Ontario economy. Frankly, it's not the income tax cut. You may not agree with that, but that is the case: It is not the income tax cut; it is exports. I say to all of us, if we don't first and fundamentally appreciate that, we are going to lose our most valued economic asset, and that's our exports. In fact, I don't think there's a place in the world now that relies as heavily on exports as Ontario does, and I might add that 90% of it goes to one country, the United States. That's fine, but our Ontario economy now is totally dependent on exports primarily to the US. I make that point because if we say we can continue to cut support for the things that have gotten us there, we run the risk of undermining the very basis of our Ontario economy.

Because some of the members talked about the election campaign, I wanted to say that one of the key financial promises in the Conservatives' election campaign was that they will cut one cent of every dollar we're spending in each of the next two years. It doesn't sound like much, but in my opinion what it means is that because health care spending is going up by \$1.2 billion, to cut 1% of spending you've got to cut \$900 million. You take the two of them, and what Mike Harris has said is that he's going to cut \$2.1 billion. I go through this math because it means that on the rest of the budget, exclusive of health care, we're looking at a cut in expenditures over the next two years of roughly 9%. I say to the people of Ontario that that may sound simple on the surface, but I'm anxious to see where Mike Harris is going to cut 10% from our universities, our colleges, our education system, our policing organizations, our roads. Where is he going to find that? He's says, "I'm going to cut 1% in each of the next two years," but it is about a 10% cut in overall expenditures.

I want to point out the promise on education spending, because I think it also is important. Mike Harris has said, "I'm going to freeze spending per pupil for four years," and at the same time Mike Harris says inflation is going to go up at 2%. Again I say to the people of Ontario, if you have been in our classrooms recently you'll realize that we are beginning to be under significant stress, particularly for many of our special-needs students. But Mike Harris has said, "I'm going to freeze per student spending for the next four years." With inflation going up at 2%, that is a significant decrease in support for education.

Finally, on health care, the promise there is that over the next four years health spending will go up, they say

20%, but actually it's about 15% over the next five years. That's slightly in excess of inflation over the next five years. I am going to be interested in how we are going to fix our health care system with spending going up just slightly in excess of the rate of inflation.

I want to talk also about what's called the SuperBuild fund. What Premier Harris has said here is that over the next five years it is his intention to spend about \$10 billion of taxpayer money on our infrastructure for the province of Ontario and to get the private sector to provide about another \$10 billion for infrastructure, for a total of \$20 billion over the next five years. It's important to remember this: Historically in the province of Ontario, we have spent on our infrastructure each and every year about \$4 billion. Premier Harris has decided he can cut that to \$2 billion from \$4 billion and he'll get another \$2 billion a year from the private sector.

I want to raise a cautionary note on this, because the first example of the Harris private-sector/public-sector partnership was the 407. I say to the users of the 407, you have been sold down the road. What Premier Harris did before the election was to sell that road, and the reason he was able to sell it at the price he sold it at, which by the way was double what it cost to build it, was that he guaranteed the buyer 99 years. The buyer bought that road—for the member for Bramalea, the 407 runs right through his riding; he will be interested in knowing this. Here's how he did it. He sold it for 99 years. It would be like selling the 401 for 99 years. He said to the buyer, "We will guarantee that you can take tolls up every year for 15 years at inflation plus 2%." It is a terrific buy for the purchaser of that road, by the way, if any of you out there don't pay your tolls, Mike Harris will collect the money for the toll road people by not renewing your licence; you can't renew your licence. For Premier Harris, it was great because he had a pre-election goody of an extra \$1.6 billion. For the purchaser of the road, it is a fabulous deal. For the 99 years they own this road, which, as any of us who live in this area know, is getting busier every day, it is a guaranteed moneymaker of the first order: inflation plus 2% every single year for tolls.

I say to the members, we are going to embrace this private-public sector partnership. If the 407 is an example of what you regard as good public-private sector partnership, we've got a problem.

The second area on the SuperBuild is that we are, I gather, going to from now on fund the construction of schools by providing school boards grants over 25 years to pay for the cost of leasing a school. Well, that is a debt trap. If we think we can continue to spend \$400 million a year on capital and only expense one twenty-fifth of it, believe me, in about five years we've got a huge debt trap.

My background is business. I ran three companies. I had 300 employees. I know exactly what it is to, as they say, make a payroll, but I also know that businesses are in the business of making a return on their investment, and that's completely, totally understandable. So there is no free lunch from the private sector. They will certainly

build and lease a school, but it's not a way that you substantially reduce your cost; it's another way of funding your debt.

I say to Premier Harris that we will be watching this SuperBuild fund very closely. In our opinion, you got off totally on the wrong foot on the 407, and it's only now, by the way, that the 407 users are beginning to realize it. The owner of the road said, "We're going to extend the rush hours." What does that mean? It means they can charge higher tolls earlier in the day and later in the day, and they can take the tolls up every single year at inflation plus 2%, no questions asked. After that, there is no real restriction on the potential increase of tolls.

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I want to alert all of us as we look at this SuperBuild fund, that we recognize, as I say, that for the private sector there is no free lunch. They will want a return on their investment. If all we do is sell off—what's called a stream of revenue—if all we do is say to the users of these services, "We're going to cut you loose; you have to deal with the private sector on this and pay your money directly to them," and there's no real benefit to our taxpayers, then it's just a shell game.

I didn't say this earlier, but I welcome all the new members to the Legislature on both sides of the House. I hope they enjoy this responsibility and honour as much as all of us do who have been here. While I didn't necessarily agree with everything that was said earlier by the new members, I certainly thought they put a lot of thought into their speeches and I welcome them.

They were talking a little about, "You must balance your books and you must make sure you keep your fiscal house in order." Well, the report card came out. The public accounts came out about a week ago, the final audited statements from the Provincial Auditor, and these are the numbers: When Mike Harris took over as Premier, the debt of the province was \$88 billion; four years later, the debt of the province is \$109 billion. It's up \$21 billion. It's up enormously. The debt is up by almost 25% in just four years under Mike Harris. The measurement here is that the debt to GDP is now actually higher than when Mike Harris became Premier. I just say to the great financial guy, Mike Harris, that he hasn't come even close to balancing a budget yet. The debt of the province is now up \$21 billion.

Interjections.

Mr Phillips: I know the members don't like to hear this, but it is important to remind ourselves. I know that the tax cut is politically popular. As a matter of fact, you won and we lost. I just say to the people of Ontario that we've had to borrow every penny for that tax cut.

The last thing I'd like to say, because my colleagues want to get on, is that I challenge the member for Bramalea to go back and look at the record. The unemployment rate when the Liberals left office was lower than it is today. We had just finished a balanced budget. The last time a Conservative government balanced a budget was 1969.

Interjections.

Mr Phillips: Check the numbers. It's in your own budget. The debt-to-GDP ratio was 15%; today it's 30%. I just say to the member—the member for Bramalea is, I suspect, a thoughtful individual—go away and check that. He will find the unemployment rate was lower when the Liberals left office. They had just finished a balanced budget—the first time in 20 years. The last time a Conservative government balanced a budget was 1969. I challenge him to look at that.

I know this is very upsetting to the members, and I'd like you to try and calm down a bit. I know you don't like to hear this because it's quite upsetting. It's not what Mike Harris told you. But you are independent thinkers. Go back and look at the record: Lower unemployment, just finished a balanced budget and the debt to GDP was 15%. The older members here, for the audience, are very unhappy. They don't like to hear this. I just ask the newer members to go and look at the facts. I know Mike Harris sends you these things every day, but look at the real facts.

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough-Rouge River): What an eloquent individual. My colleague from Scarborough-Agincourt has delivered an unusually—as soon as he put the facts before these Conservative members, they all get itchy and scratchy over there. They don't like to hear the facts about how we balanced the budget on many occasions. I know how they feel.

We are so blessed with such wonderful members from our caucus here and many of the new members who have come. I want to congratulate all of the new members who have come to join us in this arena. I know they will come with rather fresh ideas and will not be coerced and pushed around in any way by their leader, especially over there in the Tory caucus, and I commend them and welcome them to the House.

I have dealt with my colleagues here, and what a wonderful bunch of people we have in our caucus, tremendous people who bring such intelligence here to the arena in Parliament. Let me just say, "Congratulations to you all."

But here we are. We are back in the House again with a government in its demonstration of arrogance. When the people of Scarborough-Rouge River elected me for the fifth time, they said to me that I must come back to the House and remind this government that they cannot continue with their bully tactics and arrogance. I said I was confident they wouldn't. I was so confident because I thought that in the last couple of years they had learned their lesson.

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): You were wrong.

Mr Curling: As my colleague says, I was wrong. It didn't take a couple of hours for me to assess the things they have done, and you know that too. As you know, we have been reduced from 130 members to 103 members. He was saying this is fiscal restraint. We've got to be leaner and meaner. We can deliver to the people with fewer people and do better.

But what have they done? They have increased their cabinet fourfold. They have more cabinet ministers over

there than before. I know some of the new members got up and were so proud to be parliamentary assistants. Of course, they get a little additional money too. But the fact is that they have more parliamentary assistants than they have to.

Interjection.

Mr Curling: I know the minister doesn't get a chance to speak on her own because she's been told what to say most of the time.

For the last 10 months many of us have waited very patiently to debate the things that are of great concern to our constituents in and around the province. We only met, as you recall, for seven days, I think it was. Can you imagine if this were happening in any other country in the world. This same government here, this arrogant government, stands up and talks about dictatorship and arrogance.

We don't have to go too far. We just have to cross a couple of steps over there. There is arrogance in its glory. They have met for only seven days in the entire time. Then they come here today and say: "We want interim supply. It's urgent. We need that money right away to pay civil servants. We need that money right away."

But where were they all this time? They were there, in their arrogance, sitting there. They couldn't even introduce a proper bill today. They were sneakily bringing it around without any debate. Furthermore, they asked us to sit a little late tonight to make sure this happened.

But they had 10 months for us to debate some of the issues of the day. No way. We only met for seven days. Such arrogance. I think they know that. I have to remind them once more, lest they forget—and the member for Scarborough-Agincourt reminded them—about the balanced budgets we had many times when the Liberal Party was the government of the day.

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Then they come and talk about the reduction of the deficit. They think they can continue to fool the people of the province. As you sit around the cabinet table on Wednesday mornings, remind your leader and your finance minister that they have increased the debt to \$109 billion. Who's going to pay for that? Your children and my children will be paying for that. It will be on their backs to pay off the \$109-billion debt.

Then you brag that you are going to bring in a law that will penalize any member of Parliament or any government that runs a deficit. You guys should go to jail for bringing the debt so high. Forget about deficits. Let's talk about debt. Let's talk about the debt you have done and left this legacy to the people of Ontario. Sooner or later they talk about cutting taxes. I ask them where they're going to get the money for that debt. Of course they're going to pay them, and they're riding on this surf, saying: "What a wonderful economy we have, that the government of Ontario has introduced. We are the ones responsible for this economy in North America. As a matter of fact, the only reason America is surviving so well today is because of Mike Harris. He has done it all."

Let's take a step back and find out—

Applause.

Mr Curling: As you applaud, the fact is that if we go on the streets today, we have more homeless people than ever before. Remember, it's a province that talks about the great management of its money. More homeless people are on the streets.

Ask about affordable housing that people want, to get accommodation in order to live decent lives. There is far less available affordable housing for people to live in.

Remember, we have a government here that talks about the fact that they are so fiscally responsible. We have a minister who will brag about kicking people off welfare. Many of their corporate people are—let's look at one, let's look at Eaton's. Can you imagine: They were allowed to get a reprieve from the courts so they could sell off their assets. Many of the people on welfare were kicked off so fast that the assets they had—now they're on the street and they're homeless, and they won't take responsibility for it.

They think we are fooled. They think the opposition here is fooled when they direct our interest to squeegee kids. We know that is a red herring to drag us somewhere. Of course those people need to be looked at and assessed. But you feel that we'll attack you on squeegee kids. We want to attack you on the arrogance you have displayed here in this House. We'll make sure you don't get away with it. We'll make sure that when this government comes forward with their arrogance and closures on bills, and does all the things they do that are so undemocratic, we'll be right on their backs. We will be telling the people, "This is the real Conservative arrogance that we see around this place."

The Minister of Housing and Municipal Affairs hasn't even appeared in the House one day for us to ask the important questions about affordable housing. He's gone. They said, "He has seen the light, and that's why he quit." Our leader, Dalton McGuinty, put it so adequately. He said, "When the heat was pushed to him, of course he ran."

The Premier, in apologetic terms, talks about, "He has done nothing wrong." Sure it's an allegation. What is an allegation? I was the Minister of Housing, and I understand the role we play. We have to be fair and balanced about both the people who are producing the homes and those who live in those homes. We don't want to contract those powers out to some friend. It's wrong. It's totally wrong. You cannot go about running a government like that. You must be responsible for your actions. You must be responsible and accountable, for the people put you there to represent their needs. It's a democratic society. You're coming at us in a very arrogant, very dictatorial way. If you repeat it one more time here in this House, we the Liberals will make sure you are accountable for the things you are doing.

Let me talk about some of the things they've done here. I notice that this government attacks immigrants, very much so. Have you ever noticed that? Everything that this government says is negative about immigrants.

I'm going to give you a suggestion. If you want to do something positive about immigrants—the immigrants that you are and the new immigrants who are here—it's access to trades and professions. There are people who have come here qualified, ready to work, prepared to do the job and to build their country, Canada, and their province, Ontario. Why don't you try to assist them so they can have access to training in the profession they have been trained in? Oh, no, you're not working together.

Hon Mrs Ecker: On a point of order: The honourable member has made some allegations about the motivations of all the members on the government side. I think he should withdraw those.

Our comments about Ottawa not living up to its obligations in terms of supporting immigrants and families who come here should not be construed as an attack on those wonderful individuals who have contributed to our Ontario society. He should withdraw.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Scarborough-Rouge River.

Mr Curling: I'll tell you about the arrogance. When the truth is revealed about the negative way you stereotype immigrants around here, you don't like it. I understand how you feel, because you can get away with it, the same way they beat up on people who are on welfare.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: There's no such thing as a point of personal privilege.

Hon Mrs Ecker: We find his comments quite distasteful and very inaccurate and very unparliamentary, sir.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Scarborough-Rouge River.

Mr Curling: This government should know better, should understand that government is there to protect the most vulnerable in our society, to help our citizens to have access to trades and professions, not to be calling them names in a way that will stereotype them, that they are not competent in our society.

We all are immigrants, and some of us who have been here longer seem to have that licence to tell other people that they're not individuals who are worthwhile in society. I tell you, my friends, that this province and the people of this province will not stand for that. They see through all of this arrogance that you put forward. We know we have a party that stands up for the rights of those individuals. We know we have a bully government and a very dictatorial government. We know they feel confident in the fact that we will stand up for their rights, and we will do so.

I know certain bills they are introducing now about some of the most vulnerable in society are coming limping through. When that legislation comes through, we'll speak very emotionally about it and make sure of the right thing and be passionate about it all. We know at that time that democracy will prevail, because we have seen the action of this government. We have seen the action of Mike Harris. We have seen the action of the Tories. We

have seen what a bully sort of government they could be. We will stand up for the rights of those who are the most vulnerable in society. I'm very proud to know that we are here to do that.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I couldn't help but be impressed by a glaring and blaring headline I saw in Conrad Black's flagship newspaper, the National Post, the official apologist for the Harris government and, of course, the federal Reform Party, which are one and the same. The headline talked about the arrogant Liberals' delay of the return of Parliament. It was a story by Robert Fife, I think it was. Completely ignored was the fact that these people who talk about wanting to work all the time had this Legislature in session only seven days this whole year. How did they do that? They didn't bring the House back from mid-December of last year until a few days in the spring of this year, and they did not sit. Then, of course, when it came to the fall session of the Ontario Legislature, they delayed it once again. These are the people who talk about how people should put in a full day's work, and they're always after people they think are deadbeats. Yet this is a government under the leadership of Mike Harris who had the House sitting only seven days until it was reconvened this time.

I can tell you that, yes, there were some complaints from the member who was objecting about others previously who is now barracking from her seat, the minister of all education, who is now talking about some instance a few years ago. Yes, you were critical of the NDP at that time because you said they sat only 20 days in a year, but, surely, seven days up to this point in time is a much worse record.

I'm going to, in a different speech, get into the issue of the relevance of this House, particularly for the new members of this House who are elected this time, and how irrelevant this Legislature has become.

There's a good book just out by Duff Roblin, who is the former Conservative Premier of Manitoba and a leadership contender federally for the Progressive Conservative Party, a highly respected individual, talking about the role of individually elected members and how he believes that elected members should individually have much more power than they have now. I think the newer members will recognize soon how little power they have, that the power rests in the Premier's office, that Guy Giorno, who just got his big raise and the other staffers for the senior echelon of this government—so they make more money than you people do now, who sit in the back benches—are really the people who control this government. They are the people who will continue to control this government, because there's a tendency to concentrate that power in one area.

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I may disagree with my friend the member from what used to be Ottawa-Rideau—it's a new Ottawa seat now—on certain issues, but I would want him, as an individual member, as I would want myself as an individual member, to have some power and influence in this House, since we are elected members, and not have that

power given to Guy Giorno and the group of whiz kids who surround the Premier of this province. And it happens, I must tell you, in other provinces as well.

I heard people mention the debt. I used to go to the chamber of commerce meetings and I'd say, "What is it we have to do in Ontario?" They'd say: "We've got to get after that debt. The NDP left a big debt. We've got to get after the debt." Now the cat has their tongue. After the speech from the throne, I was listening carefully to hear anybody talking about the debt. They've abandoned the debt. The debt apparently is OK, because we've got to rush headlong into yet another set of tax cuts.

I remember my friend from Wellington, Mr Ted Arnott, and his stance originally when they wanted to have these tax cuts before they balanced the budget. He and a small cabal—is that the word you use?—of people within the Tory caucus said to Mike Harris and the whiz kids: "No. What we've got to do is balance the budget; then we give the tax cut because then we don't have to borrow money." What did this government do, the paragons of virtue when it comes to fiscal responsibility? They added \$21 billion to the provincial debt, an almost 25% increase. There was an obsession with it; that obsession is gone.

Let me tell you who else is now involved in the deficit and the debt. That's our local hospitals.

Interjections.

Mr Bradley: The members can barrack all they want over there, but their local hospitals now, in many cases, are forced to incur deficits because of underfunding by this government. Now they are forced to do this: They're forced to cut back services.

Hon Mrs Ecker: What about the hospital deficits when you were there, Jim?

Mr Bradley: I've obviously provoked the minister of all education because she is barracking at me once again.

I remember the days when there were excellent services available in our hospitals, where you had all kinds of nurses there and doctors and other non-medical personnel making the hospital a reasonable place to visit. Now when you talk to somebody in this province and say, "You were in the hospital 10 years ago, and you were in the hospital this year; what's the difference?" they say, "You know, those nurses and other staff personnel are working so hard, but there are so few of them." They remember that Mike Harris said, "They're just going to have to learn to cope, because they're like Hula Hoop makers." The Hula Hoop makers had to find another job, and Mike Harris said that was going to happen with the nurses as well. You just ask any independent observer what it's like to visit a hospital today compared to 10 or a dozen years ago, and they will tell you it's a substantial difference. Is it because the hospitals want to provide a lesser service? No. It's because this government had an obsession with giving tax cuts at the expense of health care in this province.

All political parties—Conservative, Liberal and NDP—could take pride in the health care system that we developed and maintained in Ontario, but you people

have decided that's not so important. You seem to be on a path to a two-tier health care system, where you are with so many things. If you're rich, if you're privileged, you're fine—you can pay the user fees or you can get some other services somewhere else—but for the average person in this province, you can't have it.

I listened to an interesting instance. I'm not trying to be nasty, but I want to point out a difference. I heard in the speech from the throne—

Mr Wayne Wetlaufer (Kitchener Centre): You lost the election on those arguments, remember?

Mr Bradley: That's the arrogance over there. The member for Kitchener wants to tell us, for everybody who's watching tonight, that we lost the election. Isn't he great? He won, we lost, and we're supposed to bow down to him. Put that aside. That's the arrogance that has taken only a few days to infiltrate this government.

I listened to the speech from the throne, and I'm not being nasty; I just want to show you how you people have one set of rules for some people and not for others. I heard in the speech from the throne that if somebody were to defraud OHIP and be charged with that—not OHIP in this case; it would be, I think, OSAP—that person would not be eligible for OSAP any more. Fair enough, you might say. If a person were to be charged in court and convicted of perhaps welfare fraud, well, that person was to be ineligible from getting another government cheque. But you know something? If you're convicted of income tax evasion, that doesn't apply.

That's where the inconsistency is. You have to be fair to everybody. Either it's one rule for everybody and everybody applauds or you have different rules. What I see is a different set of rules that this government applies. As I say, I'm not trying to be nasty. Members who know me in this House know that I'm not that kind of person. I'm simply pointing out to you the difference, that you people have one rule for the rich and the privileged and the people you like, the people who surround you, the people who hover in the Albany Club to celebrate the speech from the throne and the budget, and other people of this province.

I hope you will ensure that you're going to cover the costs that hospitals are incurring at this time, trying to provide good services for people in this province.

I hope you will watch carefully the unrestricted, almost untrammeled, development that I see taking place. In my own city tonight they're talking about expanding the urban boundaries on to some of the best fruitland in the province of Ontario, excellent agricultural land that, if a decision were to be made to expand those boundaries, we would see gobbled up.

Interjection.

Mr Bradley: I don't make this a partisan issue, because I think it's an issue that each one of us in this House should be concerned about, and that is the preservation of agricultural land. I know the member for Rexdale is going to have his opinion and his interjections, and I understand that. But I think of some of the agricultural members here and some of the urban people and

how important it is to have that agricultural land available to us. I hope that all of us, as members of this House, will be very careful in analyzing the use of land, especially precious agricultural land, because there isn't that much of it in the province of Ontario.

I've agreed to share my time with others, so I certainly, as I get into my last few seconds, would want to mention the Ministry of the Environment.

Many of the people who supported you people were happy to see you around because you said, "We're going to get the Ministry of the Environment out of your face," and you know something? You sure as heck did. You've got my good friend Frank Sheehan, the chair of the Red Tape Commission, who was writing letters to people and saying how these environmental regulations were bothersome, and others within the government. You changed legislation to weaken environmental legislation and regulations in this province. But most of all, you cut the staff, the human resources in the ministry, by some one third and the budget by over 42%. You cannot protect the environment adequately while you are dismantling the Ministry of the Environment. I hope I will have an opportunity at some future time to deal with that particular issue.

I do want to ensure that my good friend from Essex is able to talk about some of the challenges in his riding, so I want to yield the floor to him at this time.

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Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): It's a pleasure for me as well this evening to stand to speak to the interim supply debate. It's unfortunate, though, that since this government has been so lax in bringing the Legislature back we have to sit in the evening. That's not bad. I'm from out of town. I enjoy sitting and debating issues in the evening too. The thing is I like to truly debate issues and have the time to debate them. It's unfortunate that they've limited the debate on the interim supply bill. Over the weeks to come I'm going to want to speak to the Legislature and to my constituents and particularly to the governor—"governor": That's a Freudian slip, because it's more like New Jersey all the time, isn't it? So "governor" is right.

I'm going to want to speak to the government about things like safety on the 401 and the gridlock that we have on the 401 in the southwestern part of the province, basically between the cities of London and Windsor. I'm going to want to speak to the issue of how this government has totally abandoned agriculture. I'm going to want to speak to the issue that my colleague mentioned about how our hospitals are forced into deficit positions because they don't want to reduce the services to the people in their communities.

I'm going to have to speak to the fact that boards of education have to incur deficits now because they can't provide the special education that they could provide before. The government says, "We'll tell you how to define those who need special assistance; we just won't help you pay for it, that's all."

But tonight I want to pick up on something the member for Wentworth-Burlington said. He said they have

been able to do all of these great things without reducing services. Well, let me tell you something: You try to get a driver's licence in this province today in a reasonable length of time—

Mr Bradley: Impossible.

Mr Crozier: —and it's impossible.

One thing governments are here for is to serve the public that they represent. Governments are here to provide those services to the public when in fact they demand that certain criteria be fulfilled, ie, that you have to have a driver's licence to drive a car. The problem is, once you're qualified for it, you can't get an appointment to get one for six or eight months. Once you want to increase your skills, your licence degree, if you like, the degree of licensing you have, and better employ yourself, you know what the problem is? You can't get an examination for it for six months.

What did the Minister of Transportation do to try to rectify this?

Mr Bradley: He made an announcement.

Mr Crozier: He made a big announcement, exactly, as my colleague from St Catharines says, on October 15. This is a little confusing, and I wish he'd go back to it. For more information we can contact the minister's office and the communications branch.

Let me quote from it. It says: "The graduated licensing system is working. However, current waiting times for tests are also unacceptable." He says, "The graduated licensing system is working," but then in the next sentence he says, "But I'm going to tell you something: That's also unacceptable." I think that's probably just a typo, but it is rather confusing when you say on one hand it's working and then in the next sentence you say it's unacceptable.

But the government is taking steps to reduce the backlog. What are they doing to reduce that backlog? I've been after the Minister of Transportation, both the current one and his predecessor, to reopen an examination centre in Essex county. One was closed in Leamington a couple of years ago, and since that time students, the elderly and everybody else has had to go either to Chatham or Windsor to get a driver's examination. As I said before, the problem is that you can't get it for six or nine months.

Mr Bradley: But they got their tax cuts.

Mr Crozier: Oh, of course they did.

What are we going to have? We're going to increase the number of full-time driving examiners in Windsor by five. That might mean that rather than waiting nine months, you only have to wait four and a half. Big deal. In Chatham they're going to increase the three full-time examiners by two. That might help it in Chatham as well, so you may only have to wait three or four months.

Let me tell you something—and this should make economic sense to any of you over there—there was an ad in the Windsor Star this past weekend for driver examiners. They're going to pay them \$633 a week. As part of this ad it says, "the ability to climb in and out of automobiles, buses or trucks at least 20 times a day." It

doesn't say that you have to do any good work while you're doing it; it just says you have to be able to climb in and out of them. Do you know what it costs somebody getting an examination for the examiner to climb in and out of that vehicle? Seventy-five bucks.

What we're saying is, if an examiner—and let's give them the benefit of the doubt—can do 15 examinations a day, times \$75, do you know what that's going to amount to in a week? About \$5,600 in income. They're going to pay that examiner \$633. Let's throw in 40% for benefits, 40% for overhead. Minister, you can go out and hire a lot more examiners. You can go out there and serve the public like you should serve the public, and you can keep this money grab going at the same time. I get a lot of complaints in my riding that it's simply a money grab: \$75, and 50% of them fail. With a failure rate of 50%, there's that much more income. It's simply a money grab.

My point is this: It's a big deal when he says he's going to increase the number of examiners by 186, I think it is, in the province. But he can even double that figure, reduce those lineups and still make money as well.

We're going to watch the minister very closely. We're going to continue to ask the minister to open up an examination centre in Essex county. Therefore, students who want to get their first licence won't have to take a day off school. It will be closer to home, better for them. Seniors who need to be re-examined will be able to take their examination closer to home. So, that isn't all you're going to here from us down our way when it comes to driver's licence examinations.

Let me tell you something else we're going to talk about down our way, and that's gasoline prices. It was mentioned in the budget that the provincial government will investigate high gas prices but plans to do little about them. Instead, it will hand the results of its probe on to the federal government.

Let me tell you something. I've looked at this a lot more closely than the minister who's yapping over there.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): I thought maybe we needed a little time out. It was getting too rowdy in here. I'd like to be able to count on your company for the rest of the evening, so I'd like you to pay attention to the speaker, and the speaker is the member for Essex.

Mr Crozier: Thank you, Speaker. That helps me get my ministers straightened out, because nowadays with ministers resigning, some are carrying two portfolios, I really don't know who is in charge over there.

Let's get back to gasoline prices for a moment, Speaker. Sir, with respect to you, I should speak more to you, so then I'll know when you are standing and some of the members over there won't have to remind me. Thank you.

Let's talk about gasoline prices. The federal government certainly has the responsibility to determine that there is no collusion. I am one who is going to join you

and everybody else if you can strengthen those laws, and if we can encourage the federal government to strengthen those laws, let's do it. But when this provincial government stands up and says that the federal government is the only one that controls gas prices, they don't know what they're talking about, because provinces can in fact control gasoline prices.

Let me give you an example. A few weeks ago, I visited PEI and I met with the regulatory commission in PEI. Part of the information they gave me was the weekly pump price survey as of September 28, 1999. For example, in Windsor gasoline prices were 63.8 cents per litre; Toronto, 63.1 cents per litre; Sault Ste Marie, 66.9 cents per litre. You know what the price was in Charlottetown, PEI? It was 56.8.

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We have heard that it's all the federal government's fault, but quite frankly, the only one who can control gasoline prices is a provincial government. This government tells us they're going to continue to have their watchdog, which does absolutely nothing; we can all do that. In fact, just a year or so ago there was a government of the crown, and I think the Premier as well, who said, "We're going to bring those oil companies to heel." They brought them to heel, all right. It was probably prior to the election, and they said: "Come on in here. We need a contribution for our campaign." That's the way they brought them to heel.

Provinces have the authority—they're the only ones that have the authority—to control gasoline prices, so to shift this blame off to anybody else isn't fair and it isn't true. All I would ask this government to do is to have your Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations contact the government—the Tory government, by the way—in the province of Prince Edward Island and ask them how successful their controlling of gasoline prices has been. Through a formula that takes a myriad of costs and expenses into consideration, they determine the lowest price that can be charged and the highest price that can be charged. As long as the retailers and the wholesalers charge between those guidelines, everybody is happy. To say that it's simply in the hands of the federal government, I repeat—

Mr Bradley: It's nonsense.

Mr Crozier: It's nonsense, it's unfair and it's untrue.

You'll be hearing a lot more in the days to come about gasoline prices, and you're just not going to be able to foist it onto the federal government. I'll be right with you when it comes to making sure that competition is fair and to strengthen the competition laws—no problem with that. But you have to do your part, and it's more than just standing up and saying, "We're going to bring somebody to heel." You've got the authority to do something about it; you should do something about it.

The Minister of Transportation is here this evening. It might be well if he got together with the Minister of Finance and said: "Look, Ontario has one of the highest provincial sales taxes on gasoline in the country. I think we should do either one of two things or both. We should

either reduce those taxes or we should designate that those taxes be used on our highways." Then maybe widening the shoulders and putting barriers in and improving the 401 in the London-to-Windsor corridor won't be such a difficult job.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate? The Chair recognizes the member for—it's not Cochrane.

Mr Bisson: Timmins-James Bay.

The Deputy Speaker: Timmins-James Bay. My apologies.

Mr Bisson: I don't blame you for getting a bit confused with the names because, quite frankly, you can get lost in the riding of Timmins-James Bay; it is quite large.

Mr Bradley: Tell us how you get around, Gilles.

Mr Bisson: I get around by plane. That's how I get around in my riding, quite easily. Being a pilot, it's a bit easier.

J'aimerais prendre cette occasion, premièrement, pour parler un peu du comté de Timmins-Baie James, le nouveau comté dans notre région. Comme vous le savez, toute la province a vu une grosse redistribution dans le dernier parlement où on est allé de 130 députés à 103. Ça veut dire pour certaines régions de la province un gros changement quant ça vient à la représentation dans ces comtés.

Je peux vous dire, monsieur le Président, comme vous le savez bien—vous y avez fait allusion tout à l'heure en vous mêlant un petit peu avec le nom—que dans le passé, j'étais le député de Cochrane-Sud, et notre bon ami M. Len Wood était le député de Cochrane-Nord, deux députés pour servir deux comtés de la grandeur, environ, de la France, un gros pays en Europe qu'on connaît très bien. Mais comme on le sait, c'est changé à un député.

Je veux vous donner une petite idée de la grandeur. Imaginez-vous si vous partiez de la partie la plus au sud de mon comté pour aller à la partie la plus au nord. Premièrement, il n'y a pas d'autoroutes. Il n'y a pas de 400, 401. Il n'y a pas de trains ; il n'y a rien. Il y a des chemins pour moins qu'un tiers du comté. On voit le comté qui part de Timmins aller tout à fait à la baie d'Hudson dans le bout de Peawanuck un peu au nord de là, dans le bout de Fort Severn. La distance est un peu comme si vous partiez d'ici, de Toronto, pour aller aux États-Unis—on parle d'aller bien proche de la ville d'Atlanta—donc c'est un comté qui n'est pas mal gros mais divers.

La partie nord du comté est la baie James, où qu'on a les résidents—les autochtones, les Cris dans leurs communautés d'Attawapiskat, Fort Albany, Kashechewan, Moose Factory, Ogoki, Peawanuck et d'autres communautés, des réserves très fières avec beaucoup d'ouvrage et beaucoup à faire dans le développement économique et social dans ces coins. On s'en va un peu plus loin à 200 milles, 300 milles de rien, et on arrive à Hearst après Moosonee, où on trouve une communauté très dynamique qui a ça à cœur, qui sait comment s'organiser, qui sait que, quand on se tient ensemble, on est capable d'avancer avec n'importe quoi et tout est

possible. C'est la communauté de Hearst. On voit aussi des communautés comme Constance Lake et Calstock, et on descend sur la route 11 vers Opasatika, Mattice, Val Côté, Fauquier, Moonbeam, Kapuskasing, Smooth Rock Falls, et j'en passe. Finalement on arrive à Timmins.

Mr Bradley: Iroquois Falls.

Mr Bisson: Iroquois Falls no longer. Iroquois Falls is now in the riding of the member of Timiskaming-Cochrane. I do miss Iroquois Falls, I must say. Iroquois Falls is a great community to represent. I had the distinction of representing it for nine years, and I do miss the people.

Le point que je veux faire : c'est un comté qui est très grand, très divers, et qui prend beaucoup d'attention. J'espère que je pourrai livrer aussi bien les services dans ce nouveau comté que j'ai donnés dans mon vieux comté.

I just want to take the chance very quickly to remind members of the House, as we all very well know, that our ridings are much changed over the last few months. The riding I represent now is the second-largest riding in Ontario, a riding that spans from the community of Timmins at the very south all the way to Hudson Bay to a community called Peawanuck and north of that almost to a community called Fort Severn.

The distance between the most northerly part of this riding and the most southerly is about the distance of travelling from Toronto to Atlanta. If you want a sense of geography, please come and visit the riding of Timmins-James Bay. I'd be glad to carry you around in the back of my plane as we travel from one community to another trying to figure as best we can how to get there when the weather goes rough, as we've had for the last couple of weeks.

It is a very diverse riding, a riding made up really of about three or four very distinctive parts. The northern part of the riding is really on James Bay, very much not connected by road. There is basically one rail line going into Moosonee. The rest is only accessible by aircraft. First Nations communities such as Peawanuck, Attawapiskat, Fort Albany, Kashechewan, Moose Factory, Moosonee, Ogoki and a few others have very, very severe problems to deal with. Many of them lie with the federal government and we've been doing some work on the federal side because, as we well know, most of the responsibility for native communities lies with the federal government, but not without a certain responsibility on the part of the provincial government. We've been working with them on a number of different issues. In fact, we have a couple of items before various ministries at this point in trying to deal with some of the issues on the James Bay communities.

Moving further south, there are a lot of woods running from Moosonee to the next community. You've basically got no roads there. If you try to go across country, it would be by way of the Polar Bear Express, if you're able to take it, or basically by air is the only way to get there. You eventually end up in the community of Hearst.

I've got to say that Hearst is a very special place. Of all the places in my riding that I've had the pleasure of

serving, Hearst is probably one of my favourites, even though electorally I did the worst there. It is the only part of my riding where I didn't win the majority of polls. I won pretty well every poll in my riding except for the community of Hearst, but I've got to say I'm working hard on Hearst. I'm hoping we do better next time. But Hearst is a very different community. It's 99% French, very proud people, people who take themselves together and work on things concertededly. They understand the meaning of the word "community," because Hearst never does anything alone. If you ever go to Hearst, you'll notice it's like everybody's on side or everybody's not on side. There seems to almost be a secret meeting that I don't know about sometimes where everybody comes together and agrees on what the community is going to do over the next little while, and then they go out and do it. They come to their federal or their provincial member, their mayor or various other individuals, to help him get there. I have to say it's been quite interesting. We've worked on a couple of projects together, with quite a bit of success, I might add, and I'm looking forward to the work with the community.

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Moving down Highway 11, many communities—Mattice, Val Côté, Moonbeam, Opasatika, Fauquier, Kapuskasing, Strickland, Smooth Rock Falls, and the list goes on. I know I'm going to miss a whole bunch in between and I'll probably get a phone call tomorrow.

But I just want to make the point: There are a lot of different communities and, as you know as members, it's not just the number of people you have in your riding that keeps you busy; it's how many municipalities you have, how many school boards you have and how many agencies you have.

I am not a fan of amalgamation, and I want to put that on the record now. If you move towards trying to amalgamate these communities, I think it's a mistake. I want to put it on the record. But it does take a lot of time, and I hope I am able to rise to the challenge.

Last but not least is the community of Timmins, a community of 50,000 people, basically a regional jumping-off spot for northeastern Ontario. It includes the mining industry, pulp and paper, sawmills, and is a regional centre when it comes to the local government area, so it's quite a diverse riding.

I want to take this opportunity also to thank my colleague Len Wood, who served the riding of Cochrane North for nine years. Len, as you know, was a very tireless worker in his community. He was very instrumental in the Kapuskasing deal with regard to the Spruce Falls deal, where we negotiated employee ownership in that community.

One of the reasons I was able to win the northern part of the riding in Cochrane North fairly well, much of it had to do with the work Len did. Len was the type of guy who was not very big on fanfare. He was not very big on going out and always trying to take credit for everything. He was the type of guy who just went out and did the

work and didn't worry about who got the credit for it. What was important for him was his community.

One thing about Len I've got to say: Len always remembered where he came from. He's a solid individual, and I tell you, this Legislature will miss him. Len always knew where he came from, he knew who he was, he knew who he represented and he knew at the end of the day who the boss was, and that's the people back in his constituency, I think something a lot of us in this House know. On behalf of myself and others, I'd like to thank Len for his nine years of service, and I look forward to working with him on many other projects.

I want to take this opportunity, because in interim supply we get the opportunity to be able to comment on a number of issues having to do with the government. I want to split my comments among a couple of different things. I'd like to make a few comments with regard to the throne speech. There are a couple of items in there having to do with the economic side of the agenda that I want to make some comments on. Then I'd like to come back to something that's starting to trouble me more and more. That is where I think we are going as a middle class in the province of Ontario.

Let's first start with the throne speech. A couple of points: Every government has an opportunity—my government from 1990 to 1995, the Liberals prior to that and certainly the Tories for many years—to put forward the throne speech. It is an ability for the government to showcase what it wants to do over the next little while. Contained in every throne speech there are some good announcements and some bad. Somewhere in between is really where most throne speeches lie.

I was interested in looking at this particular throne speech because it seemed to me, in observing as I watched the accounts from television—because I wasn't here that particular day; I was at some things I had to do up in Orillia and North Bay with regard to the ONTC and a few other things—I remarked that it was really not very much different from what we saw last spring as the government introduced its throne speech in the last Parliament.

The one general comment I would make is there are some initiatives in the throne speech that I could live with. There are some positive measures. I'm not going to sit here and try to paint everything this government does as black. I disagree fundamentally with most of what you've done, but some of the initiatives that you announced in the throne speech, if you deliver on them, I think are positive things.

But I want to take you to task on a few of them. One of them is that in your throne speech you announced that you were going to put forward \$10 million in order to help with the attraction and the retention of physicians in northeastern and northwestern Ontario. As everybody knows, there is a crisis in some communities, such as Kapuskasing, and various communities across the north. It's not a new issue. It's not one that was solely created by the Conservative government. It's an issue that's been

around for a long time. Successive governments have tried to deal with it with varying measures of success.

But in this particular throne speech, you announced the same \$10 million that you've announced twice already. I remember this announcement last fall, made by your then Minister of Health, I watched it as it was re-announced in the throne speech of last spring and I see it again this time.

I've got to ask myself, is there really a Santa Claus? Is it really going to happen? I'm normally an optimist, but I'm really beginning to wonder if there is a Santa Claus at the other side of the bench, because it's three times that you announced this money, twice that you haven't delivered it.

I will just speak as a northerner first and as a member of the party second. First of all, we've heard this announcement before. If you're going to make those kinds of announcements, at least have the decency to go out and carry through on them, because it brings people up only to bring them back down again. In Kapuskasing we have gone through a whole bunch of problems with regard to trying to keep the physicians we have, and we're having problems trying to attract new doctors into the community, and specialists as well.

People hear these kinds of announcements and they say: "Finally there's some news coming. We're going to get something. We're getting somewhere." Everybody goes out, including myself three times now, and says this is a good announcement on the part of the government. Three times the mayor of Kapuskasing, J.C. Caron, has gone out and made those comments. Three times the chief of staff of the Sensenbrenner Hospital has gone out and said, "This is good stuff." The municipality, the community, various people have said, "Finally, something's going to happen."

Well, can you please deliver. We want to not only see you make the announcement, we want to see in your deeds the actual spending of the money and putting the program in place. I think there are some positive things that we can do, first of all, to try to keep the doctors we've got, and then to work on trying to attract new ones. I just implore you, please actually go out and do it this time. We can say maybe the first announcement was a mistake; the second announcement, you can say maybe the election got in the way. But there's no reason now that you can't go forward with what you've announced. That would be the first thing.

The second one—and I take offence to this one—was the whole issue of the Ontarians with Disabilities Act. I remember, I was in this Legislature from 1990 to 1995, when the then third party leader, Mike Harris, day after day came into this House and tried to force our government in the last days of our government to move an Ontarians with Disabilities Act. Unfortunately, the time-frame didn't allow us to bring forward a bill. The Tories campaigned in 1995 on being able to deliver on that bill. Four years in this Legislature and nothing happened. Four years critics in the opposition got up, and members of the back bench, including some of your backbenchers

in the Tory caucus, and asked when the government was going to finally deliver on the Ontarians with Disabilities Act.

What did we get? We got a bill that was delivered in this House, I believe in the spring of last year. I stand to be corrected. It was a page-and-a-half bill with a title that talked about an Ontarians with Disabilities Act that had absolutely nothing in it. It had the community in an uproar. People were insulted.

People said: ‘Listen, we’ve waited for you to deliver on something for four years. You promised you were going to do something. You said you were different.’ You said you weren’t like the Liberals and the NDP, who supposedly said one thing and did something different. This whole mantra—I can’t say the word “lie,” it’s unparliamentary, so the big “blank.” The reality is that you guys went out and campaigned on this and then you had the audacity to come in this House and deliver a bill that was basically blank. It had a title on the front, it had explanations on the inside cover and had basically one clause in it. The disabilities community basically said, “Listen, what goes on here?”

Now we see in the throne speech of last week the government come back and say that you’re going to move on an Ontarians with Disabilities Act. I certainly hope you’re serious, because it’s time that we do. I will support that bill if you bring it forward in a measure that’s able to deal with some of the many real issues that have to do with accessibility and other issues that we need to deal with. But I’m telling you, don’t make these kinds of announcements and then come back and do what you did the last time, because you’re going to have an entire group of people who are not only going to be upset but, quite frankly, you’re playing with their dreams, their aspirations. They think that finally something’s going to happen.

You know as well as I do—you’re members of the Legislature as I am—that you have people that you deal with in your community who are disabled and come to you and call you, or you go and visit them, whatever way you’re able to do it, to deal with these issues. I think of people like Howard Kyle in my community, who’s called me and I’ve gone to visit on a number of occasions, and I’ve run across him at a couple of events. He says, “Gilles, when is something going to happen on this?”

Now he hears again, by way of the throne speech, that you’re going to deliver. Howard’s been there before. How many times are you going to bring him to the well? Poor Howard. The reality is these people don’t have a lot in their lives at times and are looking forward to getting a little bit of good news, because it’s difficult for them. Not only do they have to overcome their physical disabilities, but they’re having to deal with trying to compete in a society that is geared towards dealing with people who are mobile. How do you compete for a job when you’re not able to get around on your own from area to area? Most places are inaccessible. There are all kinds of issues that prevent people from getting full employment. Your government is the one that cancelled employment equity

that tried to deal with this back in the early 1990s. So I say to you, if you’re going to make those kinds of comments within your throne speech, I would at least ask you to deliver on them.

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I also want to make another comment with regard to the throne speech. My good friend Mr Bradley—I think his riding is still St Catharines—made comments with regard to the issue of the debt and deficit.

I remember, je me souviens, as we say, this government on the other side, once they were a third party, along with the Liberals, sitting there and chastising the NDP government on the issue of debt and deficit. Day in, day out, they came into this House and they just harped on it, wouldn’t let it go. The province was going to go to hell in a handbasket if we did not only deal with the issue of deficit but with the issue of debt. That was the big issue; that was the mantra.

We know what happened. The reality is there was a recession in the 1990s. The Liberals said they were going to balance the budget. We ended up with an \$8.5-billion deficit once we opened the books. Yes, we added \$1.2 billion to that ourselves. We put in place an anti-recession program, and we put in place the wage protection program. That was the NDP addition to the debt and deficit.

We made a conscious decision as a government that we were not going to fight the deficit on the backs of the working people and the middle class of this province. To take that kind of money out of the provincial coffers in the middle of a recession would have been pretty difficult to do, as you well understand, in supposedly a boom time.

But how come I hear absolutely nothing now? After four years of a Tory government, we have an increased debt over what it was when the NDP left power. There’s no attempt to deal with it in a real way, because whatever savings you’re getting when it comes to cutting programs, you’re offsetting by a loss of revenue by your stupid tax cut. You’re now saying in this throne speech that you’re going to deliver on more tax cuts.

I’ve got to ask myself, why is it that you’re so insistent on giving tax cuts? All politicians of all stripes—NDP, Liberal or Conservative—would like to be able to say to people: “Here’s a tax cut. Have another one. They’re good to have. They’re great for breakfast, lunch and supper. If I can give you one for dessert, I’ll give you one as well.”

Most politicians would love to do it. But we also have a responsibility as politicians and members of this assembly to make sure the provincial government has got the money in the coffers, to make sure we have the dollars to pay for the important programs that working men and women need in this province.

How do we pay for a health care budget that’s some \$19 billion in size? How do we pay for an education budget, between colleges, universities and primary schools, of about the same magnitude? How do you pay

for programs like that if you don't have tax revenue coming in?

This government says: "We can have it both ways. We can give a tax cut on the one side, we can cut programs on the other, and somehow it's all going to work out in the end." You guys have still got a deficit, and you still have a higher debt than you had when we left power, for God's sake, because you've been insistent on being able to deliver on the tax cut. I think that inherently is wrong, and I think in the long run the NDP will be proven right on that point.

God forbid, if we end up in another recession, we are going to be in the worst possible part of both worlds. We are not going to have the revenue to be able to respond to the issues of the economy, and we will not have the programs to be able to help people out when they most need it. What's going to happen is our deficit will increase 10-fold from what we had under the NDP if we end up in another recession because of the policies this government is following.

I say to you, it's OK to give a tax cut when you've got a surplus. No argument on that one. But giving a tax cut at a time when you've still got a deficit is not very prudent fiscal management.

The first thing that you guys should have done from 1995 on was try to work on and follow what we were trying to do, which was to manage down the cost of programs, make some hard decisions about what it is the provincial government can fund. Once you've got your balanced budget and you've got some extra revenue, at that point you then start looking at a tax cut. People understand that.

You understand, Mr Hardeman, very well. You're a very reasonable member. I've known you for four years. You're a practical guy. You come from the Oxford area. People back in Oxford understand that you don't go out and cut your neck to spite your face. They understand you have to make sure that you've got enough revenue coming in your till to pay your bills before you give your customers another break. You've got to make sure that you're there for the longer term, able to pay your bills.

But this government has gone forward with that, and I think it's a policy, in the long run, that's not going to serve us well. Why? Because the government is having to cut that much faster, that much harder. Programs are starting to really feel it. We see in the ODP program and we see in a whole bunch of other programs what's happening because of that.

I just say to the government, it's not a very good policy to be following, trying to give a tax cut at the same time that you're trying to balance the budget. I think it's not the way that you should go.

Now to the second part of my comments that I wanted to get into. My fear is that what's happened over probably the last 10 to 15 years—there used to be a time, not only in Ontario but in Canada generally, when most Canadians felt optimistic about our place in the world and about how Canada was a very different country from most other places. We were the envy of the world when it

came to very good social programs. We had a certain confidence as Canadians that was unmatched by most other countries. We travelled around as Canadians from one country to another and Canadians were respected because we were seen as being very different.

As I watch what's happened in the economy over the last 10 to 15 years, and it's been accelerating even more than that over the last couple of years, I worry now about how our nation is starting to become very much controlled by large multinationals, about how our policies are no longer really dictated by the Legislature or the House of Commons or by municipal councils, for that matter, that we're starting to become more and more captive to the multinational agendas.

The Conservatives on the other side will say, "What is he talking about?" The reality, and you know as well as I do, is that we're entering into a time when policies are very much influenced by the large multinationals of this world. They come in and they have the clout, because the big are getting bigger, with more power to demand a whole bunch of things from provincial governments in terms of changes of policies that favour them, to the detriment of the middle class. I really worry about that as I watch what's happening, and I just want to speak on that for a few minutes.

I look at the popular debate we have these days, not only in Ontario but across the province, where we see that it's getting more and more difficult for the individuals within our economy to really find a niche for themselves. As a matter of fact, one of the reasons I wasn't here a little bit earlier as the Conservatives were speaking is that I was on the telephone speaking to a couple of constituents who had a couple of problems they wanted me to deal with. I want to tell you about just one, because it's probably something you've heard in your own ridings.

One particular individual—I forget his name right now—was basically a laid-off worker. He was working for a mining company—not Royal Oak that closed down; I'll talk about that a little later—up around the Matheson area, and this gentleman lost his job, as he explains it, because he was starting to have some physical problems, torn rotator cuff injuries inside his shoulders. Eventually the employer let him go. It's non-unionized. There was not a lot he could do about it, he says. He can't prove decisively that that's why the employer let him go, but nonetheless he's no longer there and somebody else is, so you figure that out however you want. He says that as far as he knows he had no problems of absenteeism or any kind of discipline problem with the work. It was just an issue where he was not able to compete, as an older worker, at the same level as a younger worker who has an able body full of health, and he found himself unemployed.

So he said to himself: "Maybe I'll try to start up a business of some kind. I'm in my fifties; I've got a few dollars I can put into a business. I can try to do something for myself." So here's this individual who's got \$20,000 to invest. He wants to go into the logging business to do

work having to do with a slasher. For those of you who know anything about logging, it's a piece of equipment you use in the bush to take the branches off the trees once they bring the trees out to the skidway. This particular guy said: "I can go out and I can buy myself a slasher. It's about \$60,000. I've got \$20,000 to go into it. I've got a contract with a logging contractor to have enough wood to keep this thing going." So he's got guaranteed revenue. This guy went from bank to bank with \$20,000 cash and could not get a loan to buy this particular piece of equipment. How many times have you heard that inside your constituencies?

I'm finding it's become more and more of an issue as I go around speaking to people who are trying to get businesses off the ground, not only in my riding but all across this province as we speak to people. The banks are becoming increasingly difficult to deal with when it comes to securing loans. The only time you seem to be able to get anything from the banks is if you walk in and almost have 100% security on whatever it is you're trying to borrow, if you're trying to get a business off the ground.

This poor guy ended up having to go to a leasing company to buy the equipment—gave \$20,000 to the leasing company—and then was put in the position of having to rent his own piece of equipment, because that's the only way he can finance it so he can make himself a living. So he calls me up and he says: "Gilles, I'm just appalled. I did it because I didn't think there was anything else available, but I really want to complain. What do I do about this?" The problem, I believe, is that more and more we find ourselves under the control of the larger and larger corporations. When it comes to the logging industry, the wood side, the supply side of the picture, is controlled by larger and larger logging corporations which basically make the decisions. It's very difficult for the little guy to get in.

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The second part is that the banks are becoming more and more difficult to deal with. They are increasingly conservative when it comes to loaning money out to individuals who are trying to start businesses. Basically the little guys, you and I who are out there trying to invest our \$20,000, \$30,000, \$40,000 or \$50,000 into a business, are finding it increasingly difficult to find a place to invest. We are finding that the larger corporations are more and more starting to take up bigger and bigger pieces of the pie when it comes to the economy. There's very little that we can go into now as individual middle-class people investing in businesses, and when we do there are pretty substantial investments, as you well know, within your own riding.

This individual I spoke to was not the first time I've had that kind of discussion with people. I look at the member from Sudbury—I'm sure you've had those kinds of discussions with constituents in your riding—and I look at members around the area, and I think we need to start to do something. We need to do it at the federal level, yes, because banking is primarily federal, but at the provincial level we need to start dealing with how we're

able to develop programs and policies that give the middle class the opportunity to get into the economy and to find a niche for themselves, to develop their own businesses. I find it very disconcerting to see what's happening in the local economy and what's happening in the provincial economy when it comes to the inability on the part of people to invest.

I'm certainly not going to get into names and even industries on this particular example, because people will understand what I'm talking about and I don't want them to because of what I've been told by other people, but the other day a contractor came to see me and said: "We're about 10 subcontractors. The company that we are dealing with, the major company that we work for, has told us that if we don't get together within the next 12 to 14 months and merge ourselves into one company, they're basically going to get rid of us all and they're going to go and hire one general contractor to do everything." Here are poor individuals who have investments of \$1 million to \$1.5 million worth of equipment who are being told by a large multinational: "If you guys don't merge together and form one corporation, we ain't dealing with you no more. We're going to go to one other contractor to do everything."

Go check around your neighbourhood. I'll talk to the member from Sudbury because I think this one affects you as well; there are some interboundary things here. I asked the individual contractor: "What's going on? What's in it for this large corporation?" He says, "The way I figure it, they're going to save probably \$100,000 overall in being able to basically deal with one contractor rather than dealing with 10."

This particular bean counter, as I call them, in this corporation, some guy with suspenders who went to university somewhere who thinks he knows it all, who probably has never had to work a day in his life, has decided he wants to make himself look good on the way to the corporate top. So he's gone out and developed a policy that he is quite proud of; I've talked to him about it. He's quite proud of his policy as being a way to save the corporation some dollars. You know, the corporation is everything. What about those 10 or 12 individuals who have investments of over \$1 million and are being squeezed out of business because these large multinationals are squeezing them to death?

I don't know about you, but I look at some members around this assembly and you are nodding your heads up and down and saying, "Yeah, I've seen that too." I really get worried, because those investments are ours. Those are the kinds of businesses that we get into as a middle class. Ernie Hardeman over there, like Gilles Bisson, can't go out and buy Heinz or Falconbridge. We haven't got the money to get into that kind of business. But if Ernie Hardeman or Gilles Bisson at the end of this Parliament decides that he is not going to run or, God forbid, our constituents kick us out and we decide to go into business, it's our \$30,000, \$40,000 or \$50,000 investments that are going to try to set us up in business. I'm getting more and more worried as I look out there at the

difficulty the middle class is having trying to invest back into this economy.

The big myth is that we are in this big, robust economy. The economy is doing well, but for whom? For the large corporations, for the people like my good friend Buzz Hargrove and the automotive industry. "Good friend" is a bit of a stretch, but I know him well.

It's the large corporations—the GMs, the Falconbridges, the Incos, Heinz, the Westons—that are increasingly doing better. What they've managed to do by way of design over the last 10 or 15 years is to influence policies at the federal, provincial and municipal levels, and even at the international level when you look at the GATT and a whole bunch of other issues, where they're able to carve up a bigger piece of the economic pie for themselves.

Most of us in this Legislature aren't rich by any stretch of the imagination, even on the government bench, except for a few of my good friends over there. Most of us are middle class. We started out in life much the same, working-class families, went out and got an education, maybe invested in a business or went into a profession, and we did well for ourselves. What we're seeing now is that it's becoming more and more difficult for our class to eke out an existence within this current economy.

I say to the government across the way and to all members, we need to start turning our attention to dealing with ways to eliminate this expansion of the growing gap, as I see it, between the larger, richer corporations and us, the middle class. I think it's a huge problem that we're going to have to start dealing with.

They are now at the point of being able to dictate policies to governments. We're seeing your government and we're seeing other governments across the country deregulate the environment regulations, deregulate labour legislation, deregulate almost everything under the sun; privatize whatever you can because the larger corporations will win and somehow that will be better.

I want to give you another example. The Minister of Transportation is here, so he's going to like this. I talked to him a little earlier. I certainly hope he doesn't go this way, but here's the latest one.

Let me ask you, is the chamber of commerce normally friends with Conservatives? Big time, right? Normally we associate chambers of commerce as being fairly good friends with Conservatives. The Conservatives are supposedly the business party, and many times you find more Tories in the chamber of commerce than New Democrats, I can tell you, even in my community. There are a few New Democrats but, by and large, mostly Conservatives.

Do you know what the latest bid is? The government of Ontario, through the Service Ontario initiative, wants to transfer the responsibility for issuing stickers for your licence plate and renewal of drivers' licences over to the private sector. Do you know who is probably going to get this? The banks. If you look at the list of people who have bid on this, the people up at the top who look as if they're going to get this contract to issue licences, it's

people like the Royal Bank, the Bank of Montreal, the Bank of Nova Scotia. My Lord, do we have to give them more business? How much is enough for the Royal Bank? The Royal Bank made how much last year? In the billions of dollars, and now they're going to start going into competition with the Timmins Chamber of Commerce.

I find it passing strange for a couple of reasons. First of all, here are a whole bunch of independents—because about 200 of these issuers are independent business people and about another 30 or 40 of them are chambers of commerce that issue stickers and licences across Ontario. Your government, by way of this initiative, in the long run is going to undo their ability to make a living as independent issuers and, second, as chambers of commerce. I don't need to tell you what that means to individual chambers of commerce across the province. That is a core part of their revenue. That's what allows them to offer services in communities like Kapuskasing, Kirkland Lake, Timmins, Iroquois Falls and various places. The chambers are funded not only by membership but by the revenue they get from being able to operate motor vehicle registration offices.

I talked to the Minister of Transportation about this today, and I'm hopeful that in the end it ain't going to go to the extent that many people fear. But I'll tell you, I've talked to some of the independents out there and I've talked to chambers of commerce, and they're quite worried about where this is going. They're telling me that nobody is telling them what's going on. When they read the documentation, the guys who are at the top of the list are the big guys, the banks.

I just say, how much is enough? Do we need these banks making more money? I don't think so. What we need is the middle class getting a bit of a break and the ability to get into business and make a few bucks for themselves and, hopefully, by doing that, creating some good jobs for hard-working people who want to go out and work and not collect a welfare cheque. But I tell you, we need the policies to be able to get that.

2050

On that point, I want to bring you up to date on an issue that's happening in my riding at this time. Many of you will have heard of a company by the name of Royal Oak. Royal Oak is a mining company that was owned by Peggy Witte. She is supposedly a mining tycoon. She came into the mining industry, full fanfare, back in the 1980s. She was going to turn the industry on its ear. She went by way of acquisition. She did a whole bunch of things. She was even hailed at one point as the mining person of the year. She got an award about five or six years ago. Well, some award. They should take it back.

This individual threw this company over \$600 million into debt. The company went bankrupt and, as a result, the Royal Oak mine, a mine that was profitable in the city of Timmins for a number of years, that operated for at least 60 or 70 years, went into receivership—250 jobs in our community of 50,000. These are good-paying jobs. These are people who have been working at this

company—on average the seniority on the Pamour property at Royal Oak was about 25 years. People I have known for years who went to work there when they were younger are now in their middle age, as I am, and have seen no other employment other than Royal Oak.

I worked there myself for 10 or 11 years as an electrician at the McIntyre property: Not the richest company in the world, not the company that paid the best wages, but by and large a good company that had a fairly good corporate image, a company that seemed to somewhat care about its workers and tried to do the right thing. But this individual, Mrs Witte, basically put the company into debt, \$600 million worth, did not spend enough money on exploration to keep the reserves in that mine up to date and, as a result, the company went bankrupt. Why? Because she overextended herself and, as a result, the place was put under bankruptcy protection. Price Waterhouse, the receiver appointed by the court, was told last spring to go ahead and try to negotiate and find somebody to buy these mines.

With the price of gold, it was not easy. Price Waterhouse went out and did due diligence. They went through a fairly extensive process of looking for bidders. Fifteen or 20 companies came in, took a look at Pamour, went into the data room and looked at the information. At the end of it, by about the beginning of September, nobody came forward able to buy the company. Price Waterhouse announced that the company had no buyers, that the receiver was going to close down the mine and that the layoffs were going to commence as of that Monday. I and the Steelworkers went to bankruptcy court before Judge Farley, I guess about a month or a month and a half ago, made the argument that the workers had not been given an opportunity to make a bid on the mine and, as a result of the arguments of the Steelworkers and me, the court gave us two weeks to try to structure some sort of employee ownership bid.

Two weeks went by. The price of gold being what it is, we talked to a number of different private investors but were not able to come up with somebody who could bring in the cash we needed to structure the deal. Two weeks was not enough time to cut the deal. That was supposedly the end of the story, but not quite. It wasn't the end of the story.

We kept on pushing. The Steelworkers and I were still in discussion with a number of people in the private sector and, lo and behold, what came out of it was that one group of investors in the city Timmins, a number of local individuals, through a company called Potter Station, decided that, yes, they were prepared to make a bid on this property. They looked at the numbers and came to the conclusion that this was a good business investment for them as local investors, it would be good for our community and, overall, it was a win-win situation. A bid was put in.

Unfortunately, because of lack of time to put it together, the bid went in after the date set for bids to be accepted by the court. The court gave direction to Price

Waterhouse to conclude a bid with a company called Kinross.

You wonder why I'm raising this in the Legislature. Because it's going to come back on your doorstep in about two days. I just want to give you some warning.

Here's what is going on. Price Waterhouse negotiated a deal with the receiver. The deal is that they will purchase Royal Oak mine, the Timmins property, for a set amount of money, \$5 million, which is public, but they want to buy it as an asset sale. In other words, they want to keep the mine closed. They want to buy the assets, buy the property, not hire any local workers and, at the end of the day, just get what they can out of the assets.

Who knows what they're going to do in the future? They may decide to do something. But when we push them to find out if they are prepared to hire local workers who were there before and reactivate the mine, they say: "No, we're not interested. That's not why we're buying it."

This group of local investors, through Potter Station, has put a bid before the court. We were there this morning. The court has issued two vesting orders: One to Kinross to finish their deal, and if they finish the deal they end up with the mine and we lose all the jobs. But if they don't get the deal, then the Potter Station group bid that's been put in is going to be accepted by way of that vesting order and the mine will be reopened.

Here's the kicker: There are two particular issues at stake. Kinross has two conditions on the offer, the first being that they want the workers to withdraw their claims for severance, pension rights and other things that are in dispute because of the closure. The receiver has not paid out all of the dollars that are owed to the workers as a result of closure. The bill for that is about \$200,000 to \$500,000, somewhere in that range. Kinross has the condition that if they're not able to at least meet and try to deal with that, they don't want to buy the mine.

The second issue lies here with the provincial government, and I want to put you on notice. The Kinross company wants to buy this mine, but they want to do it in such a way that they don't end up with too much environmental liability. There are 40,000 acres of mining land that is in question on this particular deal.

There are a whole bunch of environmental liabilities, because when you close the mine you have to have a closure plan, and at the end of the day whoever owns it has to be responsible to mitigate whatever damages are on that property. On this particular property, it could end up being quite substantial. They're now before your Ministry of the Environment and Ministry of Northern Development and Mines trying to cut some kind of deal to limit their environmental liabilities on this property. There is a second offer that is before the courts, and your government should know about it, that'll see that particular mine reopened if they're successful.

I say to the government, if it were up to me, I know what I would do. If I had somebody before me saying, "Listen, cut me a deal on environmental liabilities and I'm going to buy the mine and shut it down and keep it

shut down and not work it or hire any workers," and you had somebody else out there saying, "We're going to buy the mine with our own money, we're going to make the investment and we're going to operate it and take over some of those environmental liabilities," I know what I'd do if I were the government.

I would hope this government sees its way through to helping the workers of the old Pamour mine, Royal Oak, and to assisting the community of Timmins and that it does the right thing: Support what is right environmentally and make sure the liability is taken for these properties in a just way; and that you give some consideration, when you're negotiating these final conditions with Kinross, and don't go and say, "There's nothing else out there so therefore we've got to accept this deal."

There's another deal. The offer is on the table, the cash is there and we're ready to close the deal. We need you guys, the provincial government, Mike Harris's government, to help us help ourselves by being able to deal with a fair and equitable settlement on environmental issues that are outstanding at that mine. We're prepared to deal with it as a group of investors. I'm only hoping that your particular government is prepared to do that as well.

This brings me back to the first point I made: how I feel that more and more the larger corporations are winning out daily when it comes to these kinds of battles. Every time I turn around in my constituency and deal with issues having to do with economic development—and I see I've got the attention of most of the government on this one because generally we all care about this; generally we understand this is a middle-class issue—I really get worried because I see more and more that the little guy is getting squeezed. It's much more difficult for people in the middle class to be able to compete within the economy than it was 10 or 15 years ago.

I'm not going to sit here and say, "Oh, it's all Mike Harris's fault." You know that's not the case. Certainly some of your policies haven't helped, but it's not all your fault. There is an agenda that has been in place for some time. It's being pushed forward by the large multinationals and special interest groups such as the C.D. Howe Research Institute and others. They're trying to get their provincial and federal governments to deal with making rules that make it easier for larger corporations to get a bigger share of the pie.

I just want to say on behalf of the middle class, and I think where we all come from, that we need governments that are clearly on our side, who say, "Yes, multinationals need to get a certain amount of leeway when it comes to certain issues so they can go out and do what they've got to do, but not to the detriment of everybody else." We in the middle class have to be able to be out there to compete and invest in the things we believe in to get our piece of that economic dream here in Ontario.

2100

Dans le temps que je vous adresse la parole, je veux aussi parler sur une autre question, sur quelque chose qui est très important pour la communauté en général, pas

seulement la communauté francophone, mais la communauté en général.

On sait que les derniers quatre ans n'ont pas été faciles et simples pour la communauté francophone. On a vu à travers la province un gouvernement provincial et, jusqu'à un certain point, le gouvernement fédéral, qui ont été après les politiques, qui ont vu des réductions dans beaucoup de programmes. On voit dans la province de l'Ontario des réductions dans les programmes de santé, des réductions dans le domaine de l'éducation, dans les municipalités, et j'en passe. Et qu'est-ce qu'on voit dans toute cette paperasse, dans tous ces coupures ? On voit que le gouvernement oublie de plus en plus sa responsabilité envers les francophones et leur droit d'être desservis en français dans la province de l'Ontario.

On a vu à l'Assemblée précédente que le gouvernement, quand ils ont transféré des services aux municipalités, a fait ces transferts des services provinciaux aux municipalités sans donner des assurances envers toute la question des droits linguistiques des francophones. Comme on le sait, la Loi 8 qui a été adoptée ici dans les années 1980 dit que, quand un service provincial est offert dans une région désignée de la province, un francophone, ou n'importe qui, a le droit de demander ce service en français. C'est un droit qu'on nous a donné par une loi qui a été acceptée par les trois partis de cette Assemblée, d'un gouvernement minoritaire.

À cause des transferts aux municipalités, on voit que ces droits ont été érodés, et on trouve que les droits qu'on pensait avoir comme francophones, de demander des services en français, n'existent pas au point qu'ils existaient avec la province. Une fois que les services sont transférés aux municipalités, même dans les municipalités francophones, c'est de plus en plus difficile pour les francophones d'aller rechercher les services.

Je veux vous avertir que c'est quelque chose que la communauté francophone n'a pas oublié, et c'est quelque chose que ce député francophone de l'Ontario n'oubliera pas. Il est important que le gouvernement commence à réaliser que ses actions envers les transferts des services aux municipalités ont été au détriment des municipalités, et aussi au détriment de leurs citoyens francophones, qui trouvent qu'ils ne sont pas capables d'aller rechercher les services en français tels qu'ils ont été capables d'aller rechercher dans le passé.

On va continuer sur ce point. Il est important de reconnaître que ces services ne sont pas une question de luxe. C'est une question de nécessité pour la communauté francophone de la province.

I want to make one last point, because it would be passing strange as a northerner not to make comments on gas prices given what was said in the throne speech just this last Thursday. I've got to say that every politician, provincial and municipal, loves to get up and make these wild accusations on gas prices and about how, "I'm a politician, and if you elect me, I'm going to do something about gas prices, municipal and provincial, especially in northern Ontario."

The reality: We're kidding ourselves. Most of the responsibility lies with the federal government. There are federal statutes that allow the federal government to deal with this issue. In fact, a committee was struck, I think about two years ago, where the federal Liberal government went out and consulted and decided to look into the issue. They came back and they said: "There's no collusion on the part of the gas companies. We don't see nothing. No, nothing's going on with gas prices in the province of Ontario or anywhere else."

Let me tell you what happened. Thursday was the throne speech. Friday, the following morning, the people of the city of Sudbury woke up to an increase of six cents a litre. Now, isn't it passing strange that all of a sudden, miraculously, without any kind of help from anybody else, all the gas stations across Sudbury increase their price at the same moment in time by six cents a litre, Petro-Canada stations, Shell stations, Esso stations. What's going on? I'm sure it was just like they all got up in the morning and said: "Great time to raise the price of gas. Let's go and do it." Not.

The reality is that the large corporations, not the retailers—Shell, Esso, Petro-Canada and the rest of them—get together in the back rooms and say: "Listen, we control this market. We can do what we want. The federal government, M. Chrétien, loves us. He's not going to do anything. He needs our fundraising dollars. Let's just go ahead and control the price of gas as we wish."

I say to the provincial government, you made comments on that in the throne speech. Bully for you. The reality is that it is a federal responsibility, and that's the one part in your throne speech that I do agree with, but when it comes to the issue of you putting out your gas-busters, it ain't going to cut it. Listen, pack up the cameras. These guys don't need to be running out on a long weekend to find out what's going on with gas prices. We know. The gas companies get together behind closed doors and they set the price. You don't have to go out with a camera on a weekend to figure that out. You don't have to send the gas-busters out to do that job. We see it every day when we go to the pumps. All of a sudden the price goes up across the city, and it's all at the same time and it's all by the same amount. You look at the price on this corner and you look at the price at that corner and it's virtually the same. Are you going to tell me, in a competitive system where there is actual, real competition and there is no price collusion, that that is going to happen?

The reality is that we've got a problem, not only here in Ontario; we've got a problem across this country, and the issue is squarely with the federal government. We've got to get the feds to take this issue seriously. It's becoming a joke more than anything else every time we see this government run around and talk about what they want to do with gas prices. If you can do anything, I would ask the Liberal members in the caucus across the way to pick up their cell phones, their computers, clairvoyant means, whatever way they have of speaking to the

federal Liberal caucus and, please, try to get them to do something about gas prices at the federal level. It is a shame what's happening in this province. The only thing I would suggest that the provincial government could have done—as you know, when we were the government we had introduced that if you live in northern Ontario you don't have to pay for the registration of your vehicle. It was a way of saying to northerners: "We understand that you're paying more for gas prices. We as a province will do something to assist you in a region that's most affected by gas prices." Unfortunately, your government did away with that. Not only did you have to recharge us for licence fees; they've actually gone up. I know because I just had mine renewed not more than three or four days ago. I say to the government that if you really did want to do something, you could have done something by way of eliminating the price of registering your vehicle.

This brings me to the end of my comments on this interim supply motion. I just want to say again that I really believe we are entering into an area where we are seeing more and more a growing gap between the middle class and those who make quite substantially more than the middle class. We see the larger corporations starting to strangle the little guy more and more every day. It's high time that somebody takes some initiative, not only in this province but at all levels of government, federal and municipal, in trying to deal with a way of giving the middle class what is justly theirs, and that is a chance at the economic dream that we all want to dream: an ability to go out, start our own business and make a few dollars.

I was glad to make these comments on behalf of the New Democratic caucus of Ontario.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): Mr Speaker, it's good to see you back in the chair. At this late hour, I would like to recognize all new members in the House and wish them all the best in their deliberations over the next four years.

With your permission, Mr Speaker, I might follow up on the remarks from the member from Timmins-James Bay and try to help my constituents to understand. Everyone knows there are now 103 ridings in Ontario, and the member from Timmins-James Bay went to some length to describe the size and nature of his riding. I'll sort of help the members understand my riding of Durham, which of course is in the region of Durham.

I like to humorously think of myself as the only member from Durham, which in fact is true. But there are, respectfully, some wonderful members who share, in the region of Durham, the duty of representing the people from that area, some 500,000 constituents whom we represent with the integrity and respect that they deserve. It's kind of reciprocal: They entrusted us with the rights to represent their interests, and I take that very seriously.

The member sitting beside me, Jerry Ouellette, represents the city of Oshawa proper. It's actually better for the citizens now, because it used to be that Jim Flaherty, Jerry Ouellette and myself all had a little piece of Oshawa. The new riding boundaries are the identical

boundaries that were set by the federal government, so it just makes very good sense.

A lot of things we do aren't for the reasons of smugness, perhaps, that others have suggested tonight but because it's the most practical way of serving the people of Ontario. Quite often, when constituents call my office in the riding of Durham, they're not certain whether it's a municipal issue, a school board issue or for that matter a federal issue. I can assure you we're there to help, and that's probably the most important message.

My riding of Durham, a quite interesting riding, includes all the municipality of Clarington, which butts up on the east to my neighbour Doug Galt. Dr Doug Galt is Northumberland, a very well respected citizen, and it's good to see Dr Galt back. On the north part of my large riding—quite a large riding, I might say—I'm very fortunate to have, in Victoria county, Chris Hodgson, also a member of cabinet. If I move sort of swinging around from east to west, I share another boundary with Jim Flaherty, the member for Whitby-Ajax—that's the new boundary riding name—another member of cabinet from Durham. If you swing along a little further, you have another member of cabinet from Durham, from Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge, the Honourable Janet Ecker, who is of course the Minister of Education. Jerry Ouellette and myself bring up the rear, as it were—not really that simple.

But we do work as a team. We have three effective members at the cabinet table. I can assure you that people in Durham—not just my riding, of course, but all of Durham—are more than ably represented.

If you ever came to the municipality of Clarington, the principal cities there, everyone here would know them. There is Bowmanville and Newcastle and Hampton, and you'd have to know Courtice as you're going along Highway 401.

The Minister of Agriculture, the Honourable Ernie Hardeman, I'm pleased to say is here tonight. He spoke very highly of me in Blackstock, where he was the guest of the Lion's Club farm appreciation night. I thank you very much for attending, Minister, but next time, keep the speech a little shorter. He spent a little bit too much time flattering me, so to speak.

Anyway, it's a wonderful riding—

The Deputy Speaker: Brevity is a virtue.

Mr O'Toole: Very good. I ran out of time. Thank you very much, sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Mrs Ecker has moved government notice of motion 2. Is it the pleasure of the House the motion carry? It is carried.

It being nearly 9:30 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 2113.

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 26 October 1999

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 26 octobre 1999

The House met at 1330.

Prayers.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HEALTH CARE

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): We have yet another health crisis that could have easily been avoided. An ophthalmologist in Sarnia is so frustrated with the Ministry of Health that he is closing his doors in the underserviced area of Lambton county. This closing will affect 4,000 to 5,000 patient visits, mostly people who are elderly and in need of an eye specialist.

This closure is a direct consequence of a boundary change affecting cap exemptions. The Ministry of Health is forcing hundreds of patients to travel 100 kilometres or more for needed eye surgery that could be provided in their own community. There is an unnecessary hardship being imposed on hundreds of frail and elderly patients and their families by the Ministry of Health. This is a prime example where the inflexibility of the Ministry of Health is causing distress and great anxiety to hundreds of people with cataracts, glaucoma and other eye disease.

My repeated attempts to contact the minister and her senior staff since October 7 have to date been unsuccessful. I will be presenting a petition to this House signed by hundreds of affected people.

This is yet another example of arrogance, whereby this government is not serving, is not listening and is not responding to the needs of people in this province.

ONTARIO AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): I want to call to the attention of the House to the fact that this year, 1999, marks the 125th anniversary of the Ontario Agricultural College in Guelph. I had the opportunity this spring to attend the 50th anniversary of the OAC, as it is known, class of '49, of which my father is a member.

Founded in 1874, the Ontario Agricultural College has contributed greatly to the development of agriculture and our world's agri-food system. OAC has provided leadership in research, teaching and innovation not only for Ontario's farmers but also for farmers around the world.

The innovations that OAC pioneered are truly amazing: from breeding livestock to improved wheat production to safe use of pesticides.

OAC published a book commemorating its 125th anniversary this year, detailing 125 accomplishments of the college. These stories represent OAC's innovation in agriculture and attempt to give a snapshot of how these breakthroughs have improved everyone's quality of life.

OAC grew in 1964 into the University of Guelph, following the vision of the then president, J. D. McLaughlan.

I congratulate OAC on their past achievements, wish them the best of luck and, as a former graduate, I saw first-hand what teachers and students have accomplished at this university.

HIGHWAY 403

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): Recently, I met with the Brantford Regional Chamber of Commerce and had the opportunity to share some thoughts about Brantford people with this dedicated group of industry, commerce and business leaders.

It was brought to my attention that, before my election, a request was presented to the former Minister of Transportation. This was coordinated by the chamber of commerce and spearheaded by the Brant County Ambulance Service.

The request was for a turnaround to be placed along the new stretch of Highway 403 between Brant and Ancaster. This will result in better accessibility for emergency vehicles and improving possible life-saving time.

This reasonable request was sponsored by the Brant County Ambulance Service, the Brant detachment of the OPP, the Brant County Fire Department, the Brantford Police Services and the Brantford Fire Department. At present, leaving from Brantford, an emergency vehicle must travel 6.5 kilometres toward Ancaster before the nearest turnaround is reached.

This means the ambulance driver will stop at the scene of an emergency on the opposite side of the highway and drop off the attendants, who then scurry across the median to attend to the injured, then wait for the ambulance to arrive from its long trip turnaround. This two-way trip takes approximately seven minutes and eight seconds. Saving seconds is crucial.

RAIL SERVICE

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I want to bring to the attention of the south and particularly to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, who is listening attentively to this, the recommendation brought forward by a committee to the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission about reducing train services in northeastern Ontario.

As many people know, the Ontario Northland is the only train running in the northeastern corridor up Highway 11, making the connection from Toronto all the way to Moosonee. There has been a recommendation by a committee to the commission to either reduce the train down to three days per week, from the current six trips we have to and from Toronto per week, or to eliminate the service all together.

I am here to say that neither of those two options is acceptable to anybody along the Highway 11 corridor. We already have very minimal train services. For this government to allow the ONTC to go ahead and reduce or eliminate services is totally not acceptable.

I call on the provincial government to do what every other government has done up to now, and that is to show the confidence of the people of northeastern Ontario by restoring the subsidy that was paid to the ONR to make sure they have the dollars to operate the train services; or at the very least, if they're not prepared to do that, to sit down with those of us in northeastern Ontario who have some contributions to give about how we can turn this train service around and make it profitable and make sure it's there for the people of northeastern Ontario.

KYLE PETTEY

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): I rise in the House today to recognize the achievements of Kyle Pettey, a successful athlete and resident of Northumberland.

At 16 years of age, Kyle is one of Canada's top athletes, who is moving one step closer to the Year 2000 Paralympics in Australia by participating in the Southern Cross World Games. The physical hurdles in his life, which include being diagnosed with cerebral palsy and breaking his back in a farming accident, have not stopped Kyle from setting impressive records in the shot put and discuss throw.

Some of his other recent successes, under his coach, John Potts, involve setting four Canadian records for the discuss throw, winning all his regional competitions and earning a silver medal for the shot put at both the Canadian and provincial championships.

At this moment, Kyle is in Australia, attempting to set a new world record at the Southern Cross World Games.

It was Robert Browning who said, "A man's reach should exceed his grasp." Kyle Pettey is a young man who has reached beyond the limits and has proven that dreams can come true if you believe in yourself. He has become Northumberland's magic man.

I applaud him for his success and extend my warmest wishes to Kyle, his coach and his family.

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WORLD OSTEOPOROSIS MONTH

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): Next month is World Osteoporosis Month. Present today in the gallery are nine women who are advocates for action to both treat and prevent the crippling effects of this disease. Some 600,000 women in Ontario, one in four women over the age of 50, are affected by osteoporosis; one in two women over 65 will have the disease. Millions of dollars are spent every year to provide chronic and long-term care for women crippled by osteoporosis and yet, tragically, less than 2% of the dollars that are spent go to drug therapies that can prevent the debilitating fractures.

This government will make platitudinous statements about their concerns, for after all, this truly is a motherhood issue if there ever was one. But they refuse to acknowledge the problems that they themselves are creating by continuing to block access to drug therapies that are proven to be effective in reducing fractures. Women with osteoporosis should have access to a choice of therapies that give them the best chance of continuing to live full and productive lives. But here again, you only get access to the best health care if you can afford to pay for it. Women who are poor don't get this best chance.

A man started a hunger strike outside the Ontario Legislature yesterday to protest this government's handling of requests for special approvals under the Ontario drug benefits plan. He is not alone in his experience or his concern. Physicians seeking the best treatment for women with osteoporosis have been constantly frustrated by delays and denials.

It is time to stop rationing access to health care in the back rooms of government.

WOMEN'S INSTITUTES

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): I rise in the House today to offer my congratulations to groups of people in my riding who have been making a difference in their communities for generations. Women's institutes play an important role in the growth and development of rural communities throughout Ontario. Their programs are dedicated to strengthening the family. They promote good family life skills and support projects such as recycling, improving parenting skills and encouraging responsible citizenship.

For over 100 years, women's institute members throughout Ontario have been quietly, actively working together for family, home, community and country. Women's institutes in Perth-Middlesex have been living up to this commitment and are key in supporting local 4-H clubs by helping to teach about bookkeeping and computers. They also conduct numerous programs and activities for local nursing homes, as well as volunteering their help when needed. This is an excellent example of how the people of Perth-Middlesex work together to

provide within their communities and across the province. It's also evidence that Ontario can be prosperous without government intervention. No government funding goes to women's institutes.

Tomorrow, the Avonton Women's Institute celebrates its 75th anniversary of strengthening the communities of Perth-Middlesex. It's my pleasure to stand in the House today and applaud yet another example of the people of the great riding of Perth-Middlesex working together to improve Ontario.

HEALTH CARE

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): Virtually every member in this House is well aware of the serious shortage of physicians in this province. Certainly, as a member from a large riding in northern Ontario, I can tell you that it is approaching crisis proportions in my part of the province. In fact, in Thunder Bay, the provision of 24-hour emergency service at our acute care hospital sites is in great peril because of this crisis.

But what concerns me is the government's casual and arrogant approach to the problem. By only making passing reference to the situation in last week's throne speech, the government sent the message that this was a long-term issue, not one that needs action now.

Yes, there are some decisions that must be made that will improve our long-term prospects for recruitment, but today I'm calling on the Premier and the Minister of Health to take action immediately to deal with this crisis.

First of all, they must eliminate the deficits presently faced by our area hospitals. These deficits are caused by previous government cutbacks, and they are tying the hands of our recruiters.

Next, they must encourage Dr McKendry to release his fact-finding report on this issue immediately and commit to acting on his recommendations at once.

The government must also act to relieve the tight restrictions on qualified, foreign-trained physicians, many of whom are keen to practise in this province right now.

The people in my part of Ontario need and deserve quality health care, whether they need it at 3 pm or at 3 am. The Minister of Health must acknowledge that, speak about it, and take decisive action to deal with this issue before this crisis becomes a frightening reality.

FIRST NATIONS

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I rise today to inform the members of this House of a wonderful success story in Simcoe North.

The Beausoleil First Nation is located on Christian Island in beautiful Georgian Bay. Two young women, both friends of the First Nation, 18-year-old Leslie-Ann Monague and her friend Michelle Jessen, recently swam the rough waters of the channel between Christian Island and the mainland at Cedar Point as a fundraising initiative. The purpose of the swim was to raise awareness of

and funding for the local share of a kidney dialysis unit at the Penetanguishene General Hospital.

Statistics have concluded that there is a very high incidence of diabetes among our First Nations people. In fact, Mr Larry Sandy, health director of the Beausoleil Health Centre, has said that up to 15% of the native population of Christian Island may have diabetes, a leading cause of kidney failure.

I am pleased to inform the members of this House that Leslie-Ann and Michelle's swim was a resounding success. The local media reported the event from accompanying boats in what was a very emotional and spiritual event.

To date, Leslie-Ann and Michelle have raised over \$16,000. The people of Simcoe North and the natives of Christian Island are extremely proud of these young ladies. Leslie-Ann and Jessica have made a commitment to their community and are an inspiration to the youth of our province.

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INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

PROTECTION OF CHILDREN INVOLVED IN PROSTITUTION ACT, 1999

LOI DE 1999 SUR LA PROTECTION DES ENFANTS QUI SE LIVRENT À LA PROSTITUTION

Mr Bartolucci moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 6, An Act to protect Children involved in Prostitution / Projet de loi 6, Loi visant à protéger les enfants qui se livrent à la prostitution.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): The purpose of this bill is to protect children involved in prostitution. The bill gives police officers the power, with a warrant, to apprehend a child involved in prostitution and return the child to his or her family, or to place the child in a protective safe house. The police officer may also apprehend the child without a warrant where the child's life or safety is seriously or imminently endangered.

TAXPAYER PROTECTION AND BALANCED BUDGET ACT, 1999

LOI DE 1999 SUR LA PROTECTION DES CONTRIBUABLES ET L'ÉQUILIBRE BUDGÉTAIRE

Mr Harris moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 7, An Act to protect taxpayers against tax increases, to establish a process requiring voter approval for proposed tax increases and to ensure that the Provincial Budget is a balanced budget / Projet de loi 7, Loi

protégeant les contribuables des augmentations d'impôt, établissant un processus d'approbation des projets d'augmentation d'impôt par les électeurs et garantissant l'équilibre du budget provincial.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): The Taxpayer Protection and Balanced Budget Act, if passed, will provide permanent protection to Ontario taxpayers: protection from unfair and unwanted tax hikes, protection from reckless deficit spending.

On this side of the House we believe that government should provide real benefit to real people and keep the economy strong.

Interjections.

Hon Mr Harris: I understand the Liberals interjecting don't agree with balanced budgets and tax cuts and that's fair, that's their position and the people have heard their position.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. As I said yesterday during the debates, if I cannot hear the member, I will rise and I will stand for as long as it takes for order to come. If I cannot hear the members speaking, we will not be able to proceed. I say that regardless of how long it will take because I do need to be able to hear the members. If the members would please give the indulgence to the Premier.

Hon Mr Harris: In spite of this, through too much of our province's recent history we've witnessed governments that were addicted to taxing and spending. That taxing and spending dragged Ontario down.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: This isn't simply saying a few words about a bill. If the Premier has a ministerial statement, it should be treated as such.

The Speaker: The member will know that the Premier just barely got started before he was interrupted. I will allow him a short—as you know, it is supposed to be short. I believe it is a short statement and I will rule if it is not.

Premier.

Hon Mr Harris: This bill will correct those actions that killed jobs and hampered hope. The legislation I am introducing today will help to keep provincial budgets balanced. It proposes the beginning with the 2001-02 fiscal year. A deficit may only be run in extraordinary circumstances such as natural disaster or war. Under normal circumstances—

The Speaker: I did allow a bit of extra time but, as you know, it is supposed to be brief. If the Premier could wrap up very quickly, please.

Hon Mr Harris: Let me wrap up by summarizing this way. We on this side support this kind of legislation. We know the opposition doesn't, but I would hope they would at least permit debate on this bill and that it could be passed as soon as possible.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: What the Premier has just done is a total abuse of the rules of this Legislature.

The Speaker: Again I will say to the members that I will stand for as long as it takes until there is silence and I can hear the member. There will only be one person in this province that will be happy with that, and that is my mother, who is watching at home on TV. If need be, I will stand for as long as it takes.

Mr Bradley: Mr Speaker, it would be quite legitimate for the Premier in debate to make the points that he has. There is nothing wrong with that. This is a place that has partisan differences. But the purpose of introducing a bill without a ministerial statement is simply to explain the provisions of the bill. Instead, we get a political speech from the Premier who points at the opposition and says where the opposition is on a specific issue.

The Speaker: I thank the member for the point of order. He is aware that the statements are supposed to be short during the interruptions. I did lose a little track of time and I'm sure the government members in the future will realize the rules as well.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: This is an important point to make. It's the second day in a row now where we've had major, substantive initiatives from the government. They were pleased enough. They had the Premier stand and then they all stood there and made a big deal, and then he made exactly the comments that should have come under standing order 35(a), which provides us with an opportunity to respond.

The word we've gotten from the government House leader's office is that there is no ministerial statement on this today, as there wasn't yesterday. Our point of order, and we share it with the official opposition, is not the length of time that it took but rather that they made the political speech during that part of the introduction of the bill and didn't do it during the part that is provided for in 35(a).

Speaker, at the beginning of this term, if this is the pattern that's to be set, then effectively they are violating the standing orders of this place. Therefore, we ask you to rule that that was a political speech and inappropriate, and we ought to hear that during a ministerial statement.

Hon Mr Harris: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I did plan to give a description of the bill and I apologize if, in responding to the inappropriate interjections of opposition to the bill, I got into that. I merely point out to the Legislature that I was only responding to those interjections that came primarily from the Liberal benches. I should have ignored it and just got on with the description of the bill, and I'll bear that in mind, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you very much. I will caution the government. As they know, there are the ministerial statements and, as I mentioned earlier, there will be some leeway in the amount of time. I think the government knows the rules as well as everybody else and I would caution the government in the future on that matter.

Mr Christopherson: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Given the fact that it would appear from the ruling you've made that you agree with the points we've made, in order to put things right, I would ask you to allow us at least equal time that the Premier took, inappropriately, as you have ruled, to respond to that political comment.

The Speaker: On that point of order, to the member, I have cautioned the government in the future on this matter but I will not be allowing a response today.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: In the interest of fairness, I would ask for unanimous consent that the official opposition have approximately one minute to respond because, as was pointed out, as you have ruled, the rules were not followed here. What was supposed to be a brief description of the contents of the bill turned into a ministerial statement. So I'm asking for unanimous consent, in the interest of fairness, that we be allowed to respond to what was in fact a ministerial statement.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? I do not hear unanimous consent.

Again I say to the members, during the introduction of bills the explanation should be short, and I would caution the government in the future.

Mr Duncan: Mr Speaker, I would ask for unanimous consent at this time to pay tribute to the late Ross Hall and the late Frank Faubert.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

ROSS HALL

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): On behalf of my colleagues, I want to pay tribute to a very good friend and former colleague of mine, the former mayor of Grimsby, Ross Hall, who was laid to rest a few days ago.

I guess there are really only three of us left, Norm, Jim Bradley and I, who would remember Ross, but I think it is fair to say that by any objective standard Ross Hall was as good a person who has ever served in this place, certainly in my 24 years.

To begin with I was thinking, I say to the government House leader, that Ross wouldn't want much done today because he'd be embarrassed that a great deal of time and effort was spent to pay tribute to him. The minister at the memorial service at Trinity United Church last Saturday in Grimsby made the point that one of Ross's many virtues was his humility.

He was a man of very fine character, a man who had served not only as the MLA for Lincoln from 1975 to 1981, after which he served two terms as mayor of Grimsby, but perhaps even more importantly—and I think in Ross's mind it would have been a more important contribution—he served on the hospital board, the school board, the Brock University board. He ran a very successful business in the Niagara Peninsula for many years.

He was very much a man of his community, and that that was so was very clearly evident Saturday morning when it was a standing-room-only crowd at Trinity United Church in Grimsby to pay tribute to a very fine citizen.

One of the things that Ross was always concerned about, particularly when it dealt with bigger government, was the arbitrary and intrusive instinct of big government. I don't think it's any secret to say that one of the main reasons that Ross Hall ran for this place in 1975 was his concern about what was happening at the Niagara Escarpment Commission. Not that he did not have a good environmental conscience, but he was very concerned about how intrusive the commission appeared to be in the daily lives of people down in his part of Ontario.

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He was also concerned about the arbitrary nature of government. I can remember one particular occasion in this chamber about 20 years ago about the actions of a farm marketing board that was being extremely high-handed as it went about what it imagined to be good works. Nothing upset Ross Hall more than the intrusive and arbitrary nature of big government.

That he was a generous soul is very evident from his contributions to which I made reference earlier. Ross was also one of those people who was blessed in life with a keen intelligence, a great family and very considerable business success, but he was one of those people who believed that to whom much was given much was expected. I had a very pleasant visit with him about a month ago and I can tell you he was concerned about the tenor of current politics. He felt that we had an obligation, all of us, particularly people who had been successful, to reach out to those in the community who had been less successful.

I don't think Ross would want me to say this, but in a sense he was a true Methodist, because by good works he wanted to be known. As he was laid to rest a few days ago, it is by his good works, not just here but across the Niagara Peninsula, that he will be remembered.

To his wife, Alison, to his children, Terry, Trish and Barbara, we say our thank you for giving a husband and father to us for the six years he was here and we want you to know that his legacy here and elsewhere will be long and fondly remembered.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): I am proud to rise on behalf of our caucus and extend our condolences to the Hall family for their loss. I did not serve with nor know Ross Hall, but certainly in reviewing his public life as well as his involvement in his community, it comes out very clearly and very strongly that he cared a lot about community and that he was a natural leader.

When I look at the years that he was president of Hall-Ogilvie Ltd, the fact that he's a past president of the Grimsby Lions Club, a past president of the Grimsby Businessmen's Association, he was a leader at the West Lincoln Memorial Hospital, a leader at the Grimsby and district high school board and he was chair of his caucus,

all of those things indicate that this is someone who cared and knew his community and also had natural leadership ability. Given, quite frankly that the 1970s weren't necessarily the best of times legislatively for the Liberal Party, he moved back to his community, politically speaking, and became the leader there: He became the mayor of Grimsby.

All of this, in summary, points to an individual who has a proud record in this place, back in his own community, a lifelong commitment to hometown and also a clear willingness to share the natural leadership abilities that Mr Hall clearly had.

Again, our deepest sympathies go to the family of former MPP Ross Hall.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Government House Leader): I want to say at this time that it was really a pleasure as a member of the Legislature and particularly in a different party to have known and to have worked with Ross Hall.

Ross and I spent the 1977-81 period of time here, which was a minority Parliament. The difference, of course, between a majority and a minority is that the opposition parties have to accept some responsibility for the outcome of legislation, because without their votes, it doesn't occur.

In some ways it was easier during a minority Parliament period to get to know members of the opposition, because you had to work, you had to negotiate, you had to actually come to a common conclusion in order to reach a successful solution.

One of the things I can say on behalf of my experience at that time as a parliamentary assistant I think to the Attorney General, as I was in 1978, is that when we went into a committee and when we wanted to deal with a problem and change the law here in the province of Ontario, there was no better person to deal with in terms of trying to reach a good conclusion for the people of Ontario, because Ross was less partisan perhaps than he was a man who wanted to really improve the laws, the rules and the lot of any Ontarian he represented, and all of Ontario—an extremely fair man, an extremely gentle and kind man, although he did speak his mind and let people know exactly where he stood.

I can remember some of the conversations even after he left this place in 1981. He would come back to several functions that we would have, and he was still concerned and still talked in very friendly terms.

When we're talking about either Ross Hall or Frank Faubert, I consider both of these men to be my friends as well as being in the opposition benches. While people who watch this place and watch us spar from day to day find that hard to understand, both of these gentlemen, and particularly Ross because I knew him during that minority Parliament period, I considered a real genuine friend and a genuine person when he spoke about an issue. I didn't believe he was ever acting or holding himself out in a position that he didn't firmly believe in.

I'm sorry to lose a friend and I want to express our condolences to you, his family, his wife and his children.

We've lost a great citizen in Ontario and a great contributor, not only to this place but to his beloved community.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I thank the member for those kind words.

FRANK FAUBERT

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I appreciate the opportunity to speak on behalf of my leader, Dalton McGuinty, and my colleagues in caucus.

I knew Frank Faubert very well for 35 years. He was a great friend. He was here in the Legislature for three years, from 1987 to 1990. He loved this place, the Legislature. He loved the building; he loved to be in this Legislature. He loved the debate. He had a real sense of history about him and I think we could all learn something from Frank on that count.

He really was one of the parents of the Rouge park. There are a lot of people who like to take credit for the Rouge park, but Frank actually was one of those who should take credit. He worked tirelessly for the Rouge park and he should be very proud of that.

He also had a bit of an independent streak. In those years we were attempting to get the Olympic bid for Toronto. Frank had a different view. He felt it should go to Athens. He actually had studied it. He felt there should be a permanent site in Greece for the Olympics and he couldn't be pushed off that position. He stood up for his principles on it, and he had not a bad idea.

But he was best known as Mr Scarborough, as Marilyn Mushinski and others would realize. He loved Scarborough. He was born there; he grew up there. He lived and breathed Scarborough.

He was elected in 1996 to council. I was actually his campaign manager. That was my first campaign job. Campaign headquarters, like a lot of them, was in the basement of somebody's house. We had the poll numbers up. I thought we were going to do really well, but that first poll came in and we had lost it four to two. It was an apartment building that had just been built. Frank's spirit was: "Gerry, don't worry. Everything's going to be fine." I had that brave face on that every manager does, but feeling, "Boy, oh boy, things aren't going well." He went on to be on the board of control and mayor.

We can learn a lot from Frank. One of the first things Frank did was, he really believed in communities and after school hours the parks and recreation department would come in and take over the schools in Scarborough and they would be the community centres. That was really Frank driving that.

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Scarborough went through an enormous change. It became truly one of the great multicultural, multi-religious communities in Canada, maybe in the world, and Frank was at the forefront of that. There are now gurdwaras, there are Hindu temples, there are Muslim mosques throughout Scarborough, and Frank made sure that happened.

He also was one of the first people who really got involved heavily in race relations. I always had a feeling from Frank—some of us in politics would kind of weigh how many votes at election time are in this thing. Frank had an ability to weigh what was the truth in this matter. He would take stands that weren't necessarily always politically popular but in Frank's mind were always right.

His last big fight was a fight to save Scarborough, and he felt very deeply about that during amalgamation.

I call him a happy warrior with a sense of optimism, because periodically this business can get us down a little bit. I never saw Frank down. He always had this sometimes misplaced but always enormous sense of optimism that things were going to work out.

He was truly blessed to have a wife, Marilyn, who I have known, as I say, for 35 years, who was a terrific partner and help to him, and a wonderful family of five children. He was one of those people who truly are blessed, and the sympathies of all of the Legislature go out to Marilyn and the family.

He also was an avid golfer and golf fan. In fact, that's where I first met Frank. It was in 1954 and I was 14 years old, so you know how old I am now. I came down from London, Ontario, to Scarborough to caddy in the Canadian Open. The day before the Open started there was an exhibition match between Betsy Rawls, one of the world's great female golfers, and I caddied for her, and Peter Thomson, who you will still hear is a famous golfer, played against Sam Snead and the greatest woman athlete ever, Babe Zaharias. I told Frank that story later on, that that was when I first came to Scarborough and whatnot. Frank said, "You won't believe it, but I was Babe Zaharias's caddy that day." So I've known Frank well for 35 years but much longer as a friend.

Finally, the Cancer Society is considering holding a golf tournament in Frank's name, which I think is a fitting tribute to a terrific person. It would be a great tribute to someone who I miss dearly, Mr Scarborough, Frank Faubert.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): On behalf of our caucus, I too would like to say a few words about Mr Faubert.

I was elected at the same time as Frank Faubert. As I remember it, there were about 95 Liberals in the Legislature after the 1987 election—he, as a backbench Liberal, elected for the first time, and I was a first-time New Democrat. We had the incredible joy of serving together on committees investigating Sunday shopping and a number of other issues that hung around and hung around. I remember Frank was one of those people who, because of his sense of community, although he wouldn't do it openly, would many times after the committee hearings suggest that the idea of Sunday shopping was not the best idea that his government had brought forward and that he would have a particular difficulty with it in terms of explaining it to some of the communities in his Scarborough.

I remember Frank as a very funny man, someone who loved to laugh, someone who came here and genuinely

every day decided that no matter what the debate, how partisan it was, how difficult it might be, he was going to have a good time and he was going to develop some friendships on all sides of the House.

He was an incredibly energetic person, someone who probably, if there had not been 95 members of the Liberal caucus, would have very quickly moved into a cabinet position. He knew that just because of the historical reality and the lay of the land he was not going to be offered a cabinet position, so he worked very, very hard on a number of fronts.

After he was no longer an MPP, when I was Minister of Natural Resources, it is indeed true that Frank Faubert was one of those people who literally spent at least some time every day fighting for, cajoling, lobbying on behalf of the Rouge River park. His willingness to work on that issue crossed all party lines. It crossed through municipal factions and municipal groups, it crossed through party lines here and it crossed through party lines in Ottawa in ensuring that the land could be assembled and that this park could become a reality. It was something he was absolutely tireless on. He regarded it, I think, as one of the things he wanted to accomplish in his public life so that when his public life was over he could look back and say: "That is something that I am very proud of. That is something that I played a part in achieving."

After he was no longer a member, as you know, he went on to become a member of Scarborough council and then to assume even more responsibility in Scarborough, and it's true that he was quite an opponent of the megacity. Even there his opposition crossed party lines. On a number of occasions I met with him to talk about strategy and tactics, about what needed to be done, about the fact that it is not a good idea to try to govern one million people plus with one government. He was equally energetic and passionate about that. At the same time as he was energetic and passionate about that, his feeling was not one of partisanship. His feeling was one that was genuinely grounded in concern for the community.

Obviously Scarborough, Toronto and this province of Ontario have lost a really great individual, someone about whom many of us who sat in this House with him were very proud and pleased to be able to say, "He was our friend." He was somebody we all respected.

We wish to add our condolences to the family and to all of those people who were very close to him in a personal way. We will miss him. The city of Scarborough will miss him. The city of Toronto will miss him. Ontario will miss him.

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): As I mentioned in my remarks on the throne speech yesterday, I had a very long and very interesting working relationship with the late Frank Faubert. I succeeded him as ward 5 councillor—actually, it was alderman in those days, way back in 1982—and I guess the one thing we had in common at that time was that we were both, I guess, somewhat vertically challenged. The difference between Frank and myself is that Frank was lion-hearted.

I served for a number of years with Frank on Scarborough city council, until 1987, when Frank was elected to this place to serve as the member for my old riding of Scarborough-Ellesmere. He served that from 1987 to 1990.

He came back to serve as councillor for ward 8 after 1990, and we both went on to run as mayor in 1994. As we all know, Frank won, so I guess in some backward way you could say that he was partially responsible for my entry into provincial politics.

There's no question that Frank Faubert was a gifted politician. He had a very strong and passionate voice for his community in Scarborough and, as has been referred to already, he had a great sense of humour. He never let his physical size get him down. In fact, he was not just a great golf player; he was a pretty good tennis player too, Gerry.

But most importantly, Frank Faubert was a wonderful family man. His love for his wife, Marilyn, and his children and grandchildren was legendary in Scarborough.

On behalf of my constituents—and I'm pleased to say that I am joined today by the Hon Pauline Browes and David Hutcheon, who served on Metro council with Frank—I'd like to once again extend my deepest sympathies to Marilyn, his wife, and to his family. I know that we will all miss Frank.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I want to thank all the members for their kind remarks, and I will see that copies of Hansard are sent to the families.

1420

ORAL QUESTIONS

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Premier. I have a serious matter that I want to bring to your attention. It involves another of your cabinet ministers. I've provided you with a letter. Can you explain why your environment minister has written a letter to the chair of Durham about a matter before the Ontario Municipal Board in which your minister advocates on behalf of a developer?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): No, I can't, but I could refer it to the minister.

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of the Environment, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I'd be happy to answer that very serious and erroneous allegation by the honourable Leader of the Opposition. At no time did I write a letter to anyone advocating on behalf of a developer.

Mr McGuinty: Minister, to jog your memory, I have a copy of a letter here. It was received by the region of Durham on August 26, 1999. At the time, there was a hearing before the Ontario Municipal Board. One of the parties to that hearing was Jay-M Holdings. You were copied a letter from a lawyer for Jay-M Holdings. You

then wrote to the chair, another party to the OMB hearing. You provided new information and you said, "I trust you will carefully consider this new information," and you asked that you be kept "in the loop."

We have a quasi-judicial hearing underway. You decide as Minister of the Environment, the man charged with protecting our natural environment, to weigh into this matter and you advocate on behalf of a developer.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Question.

Mr McGuinty: My question to you is, since your Premier is not prepared to accept responsibility for this, do you think it is appropriate for you to weigh into this matter as Minister of the Environment and advocate on behalf of a developer when there's a hearing before the OMB?

Hon Mr Clement: The honourable Leader of the Opposition has woven through his text unsubstantiated allegations and conclusions which are not supported by the facts. The letter to which he refers was a letter from one politician to another politician suggesting that he obey the law.

I make no excuse for the fact that I, as a politician, was copied on a letter by a party who wished to ensure that I knew all of the facts. I know and I can state for the record that my letter in no way suggests it is a decision other than the decision of the regional chair. I, as an elected representative of this Legislature, wanted to ensure that in all circumstances the letter and the spirit of the law was obeyed. My letter was simply suggesting to Roger Anderson that he obey the law, and I make no excuses about that.

Mr McGuinty: I know the minister would like us to believe that it was simply a matter of a piece of correspondence sent by one politician to another. It was sent by a minister of the crown. It was a matter before the Ontario Municipal Board. You had received a letter from a lawyer acting for the developer. You were copied that letter. You then sent a letter to the chair of Durham board in support of the lawyer's letter. That is interference. That is unacceptable. As a minister of the crown, you are not allowed to interfere; you're not allowed to weigh into matters before the Ontario Municipal Board.

Stand up, Minister, and tell us how this is entirely appropriate and in keeping with the traditions and precedents of this House. Tell us why this is entirely acceptable.

Hon Mr Clement: Again the honourable member makes an allegation which is not substantiated by the letter. I'm happy to share the letter with the entire Legislature because the letter simply says: "Here is the law. Let me know how you are going to act within the law and get back to me." If that's the letter they are suggesting is somehow untoward, I defy them to tell me how it is untoward, because it is not. To make that serious allegation in this chamber on the basis of a single letter that has nothing in it other than saying "Obey the law," I think we have seen the depths to which the opposition is willing to go.

The Speaker: Second question; the leader of the official opposition.

Mr McGuinty: My question is to the Premier. Premier, you now have been acquainted to a limited extent with this issue. Do you think it is appropriate for your minister, in these circumstances, to have weighed into this matter? He tells us that the only reason he sent the letter was to ensure they were upholding the law. Well, you know what? There happens to be a legal maxim that says you are deemed to know the law. There is no reason whatsoever for this minister to have written this letter to the chair of the Durham board.

Premier, do you feel that your minister acted in an appropriate manner?

Hon Mr Harris: To the best of my knowledge, I feel he has. But if you feel he hasn't, refer it to the conflict commissioner. We'll all find out.

Mr McGuinty: Premier, you cannot wash your hands of this matter so quickly and so simply. This is all about your standards. To make it perfectly clear, we're talking here about three serious conflicts: (1) Your minister is clearly advocating on behalf of a developer about a matter before the OMB; (2) your environment minister, through this letter, is going out of his way to encourage a developer to use a loophole in the Environmental Protection Act to build a development in one of Ontario's most environmental sensitive regions; and (3) you now have given this same minister the responsibility for handling the municipal affairs portfolio.

Premier, in all the circumstances here your responsibility is not to send this matter away in the hope that it will disappear. Your responsibility is to ask for this minister's resignation. Will you do that?

Hon Mr Harris: No.

Mr McGuinty: Premier, you refused to demand the resignation of Steven Gilchrist. You left him swinging in the wind for four weeks. He had to cut himself down. Now we've got another minister, a minister in your cabinet, the minister for the environment. We've got a hearing before the Ontario Municipal Board. One of the parties to that hearing writes to this minister. He then takes it upon himself to write to another party, the chair of the Durham board, telling him that he had better carefully consider this new information.

If that's not weighing in, if that's not inappropriate, then I don't know what is. I think in all of the circumstances you now have to take responsibility for this and ask for the resignation of your minister.

Hon Mr Harris: Let me first of all say that I agree with the member. You don't know what is appropriate and what is inappropriate and you've demonstrated that consistently since your election to this Legislature.

Secondly, I have had a quick look at the letter. It seems to be a referral of information to the chairman of the region. But you've had opportunities to look at it. You've had lawyers look at it. If you think something is inappropriate, say so. Refer it to the conflict commissioner and get a ruling.

The Speaker: Question, leader of the third party.

1430

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is also for the Premier. I want to come back to the point I raised with him yesterday.

Premier, we accept that your government is biased in favour of development. We've watched your government. We've watched some of the legislation you brought to the House. We accept that the Minister of Municipal Affairs is very much interested in development: real estate development, highway development, property development. The problem here is that you've done the right thing in forcing your Minister of Municipal Affairs to step aside because he is under police investigation. Belatedly, the right thing was done. But you've now placed the Minister of the Environment in a conflict because the job of the Ministry of the Environment is to ensure that when development applications come forward from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs—and that's how your government has organized it—the job of the Minister of the Environment is to ensure that ecologically sensitive areas are protected. You've put your Minister of the Environment in a very—

The Speaker: Order. Premier?

Hon Mr Harris: Unlike the leader of the third party, there is nothing wrong with being pro-development and pro-environment at the same time. That is indeed the role of the government. I believe that was the role of Ruth Grier as a cabinet minister when you made her responsible for the GTA, where all the growth is taking place, and the environment at the same time. I think she was able at that time to fulfill the responsibility to balance her role as the one minister responsible for growth in the GTA at the same time as the minister responsible for the environment. We accepted that. We accept that this minister is equal to, if not better than, Ruth Grier.

Mr Hampton: Premier, trying to compare apples and oranges is not going to do it for you. The reality is that when Ruth Grier was Minister of the Environment, the agenda was about protecting the Oak Ridges moraine. The agenda was about ensuring that you established a sewage system that worked throughout the greater Toronto area and provided some coordination so we could protect the environment.

It's very clear from the first four years of your government that that's not the agenda. The agenda is about moving forward on developments and side-stepping the environment.

As we saw yesterday when I introduced the letter and pointed out how angry the council is in Uxbridge, you have put your Minister of the Environment in a conflict of interest. On the one hand he is supposed to be protecting sensitive areas, he's supposed to be looking out for ecologically important areas when development proposals come from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs, and we see already that he's not doing that. He's behaving like a pro-development minister. What are you going to do about that conflict of interest, especially about protecting our environment?

Hon Mr Harris: Let me give you another example where a gentleman by the name of Bud Wildman was the Minister of Energy, responsible for hydro, responsible for coal-burning energy plants, responsible for nuclear plants, and you felt it was appropriate that he should hold the portfolio as the Minister of Environment at the same time. You see, you have one standard for yourselves and then another standard that you seem to allege—most inappropriately, I might add—for others.

I think it is entirely appropriate that we have sustainable development. I think it's entirely appropriate that we have growth in an environmentally friendly way. Who better than the Minister of the Environment to be able to do both?

Mr Hampton: Once again, apples and oranges won't get you anywhere, because the agenda those days in terms of energy was a moratorium on more nuclear plants. It was a moratorium on more coal-fired plants. It was to promote energy efficiency and conservation.

You said it yourself, Premier: Your government is a very pro-development government. Your government is all about moving aside, side-stepping ecological issues, side-stepping in this case the environmental assessment.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Stop the clock. I say to the government members that if in fact I cannot hear the question, I will be stopping the clock and we will take as long as it takes to settle the House down. The time will not continue to click off if it's the government benches that are making the disturbances.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I say again, if the government benches are disruptive, I will call order and I will stand until there's quiet so that I and all members can hear the answer.

Leader of the third party.

Mr Hampton: I get the impression that your members don't like this line of questioning, Premier, but I have to tell you, as long as you keep putting your government in these kinds of conflicts of interest, this line of questioning will continue.

The germane part of Mr Clements's letter is where he suggests to the municipal council, "Just change your environmental assessment."

The question is this: Do you understand the role of the Minister of the Environment or is the Minister of the Environment in your government simply going to become the minister of development, and the environment be damned? Do you understand the conflict you've created there and what are you going to do about it?

Hon Mr Harris: I think the member has identified that there can be a conflict between development and the environment, and it is the job of the government to balance that.

I don't know whether Ruth Grier was the apple or the orange or whether Bud Wildman was the apple or the orange, but I heard the member very clearly say, and it is on the record, "That was OK because we agreed with the policies of the government." So what you have acknow-

ledged today is, there is no conflict in the minister serving both portfolios unless you happen to disagree with the philosophy of the government or the philosophy of the day. You cannot have it both ways.

There is no conflict. It is the role of the government to balance growth in an environmentally sensitive way, and nobody has done it better than this government in the last 15 years.

ABORTION

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-East York): My question is to the minister responsible for women's issues. This weekend thousands of darling little children are going to go around door to door dressed as goblins and ghosts and bunnies and bumblebees and it will be a happy time. Some of them, as they're calling out, "Trick or treat," will be asking for candy; some will be asking for coins for a donation box.

In Toronto, students of the Toronto Catholic school board who are carrying donation boxes will be asking for donations for one of three charities that the board has approved. One of those charities is Aid to Women. It is an anti-abortion group that has been linked with harassment activities of women who are seeking legal medical access to services such as reproductive counselling and abortion. I have sent you over a copy of the letter that I sent to the Toronto board, respectfully asking them to reconsider this decision.

Halloween is not a time for ideological debates; it's a time for kids. Would you join with me in asking them to reconsider that decision?

Hon Helen Johns (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, minister responsible for seniors and women): This is the first question on women I've had in this House and I would like to say how proud I am to be representing women in this caucus and coordinating women's issues. Women's issues branch out over nine ministries within this government, and I know that my colleagues, female and male, are all very supportive of this.

This issue of Aid to Women and the abortion issue are issues that people feel very strongly on and they are certainly issues that we all have to be concerned about. I'd like to say, though, that I am committed to making sure that women have the proper health care that they need in this province and also have the justice that they require.

The one thing I do know, as the mother of two small children, is that Halloween is a time for kids, and I certainly am committed to kids going out there and having a great time on Halloween. It's one of the most important days of the year in their lives.

1440

Ms Lankin: Minister, in order to stand up for women you have to stand up for their right of access to legal medical services, all of them, including the right of access to abortion services.

I asked you very clearly if you would join your voice to mine. I'm not asking your government to give a directive to the board. I'm not asking the Minister of Education to give a directive to the board. I'm asking the minister responsible for women's issues to stand up and join with me, make her voice heard on behalf of women and on behalf of Ontarians who believe in women's access to a legal medical service like abortion, and say that it is wrong for the board to have decided to have kids involved in raising money for a group with a misleading name like Aid to Women. It's not a women's shelter. It is an activist anti-abortion group that has been linked in the Attorney General's injunction to activities outside of the clinics, stopping women getting access to that legal service.

A simple question: Please just say, do you agree that Halloween is not the time for this and you'll join your voice with mine, that you'll send a letter to the board requesting them to reverse this decision?

Hon Mrs Johns: Let me say that the government is committed to women receiving medical services that they need in this province. I think the Minister of Health does an incredible job to make sure that happens.

The open letter that the member opposite has prepared is written to the Toronto Catholic District School Board to ensure that they reconsider this issue. Let me say that I know the trustees of the Toronto Catholic District School Board will look at the issue, they will consider the importance of the issue, and I'm sure they did the first time they looked at it.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is to the Premier. You now have a copy of the same letter I referred to in my earlier questions. You will notice that it's on Minister of the Environment letterhead. You will know that it is signed by Tony Clement, minister.

The letter specifically makes reference to a letter received by the minister from the representative of a developer. It treats an issue that at that time was before the Ontario Municipal Board.

If there is one thing that ought to have been drilled into every head of every rookie minister in your cabinet it is that they are not allowed to interfere in any quasi-judicial matter. That is a simple precept of government.

Tell me why again, Premier, that is entirely acceptable behaviour according to your standards.

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): The letter in question is in no way directed to any quasi-judicial body. If you believe, though, that the letter places the minister in a conflict, refer it to the conflict commissioner. That's your right to do.

Mr McGuinty: We've heard from the Premier that they don't constitute the government over there. It's now quite apparent that the Premier doesn't want to act as Premier either, because if he wanted to act as Premier, he

would take leadership on these matters, not leave his ministers swinging in the wind, and do the right thing.

You've got a letter here from a minister in your cabinet who has weighed in on a matter that is before the Ontario Municipal Board. He makes a representation on behalf of a developer. To make matters worse, this guy is the Minister of the Environment.

Tell us why, Premier, this guy shouldn't resign, because you know very much in your heart of hearts that this is entirely unacceptable, this is entirely inappropriate. If you were standing in my position today, you'd be swinging off the chandeliers.

Do the right thing. Ask this guy for his resignation. Tell him he's out.

Hon Mr Harris: I think I've answered the question. The supplementary that dealt with what I would do if I were in the member's position: I would resign.

DRIVER EXAMINATIONS

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): My question is to the Minister of Transportation. I have a question regarding the graduated licensing system and the backlog of road test appointments.

Novice drivers in my riding of Peterborough are experiencing significant waiting times before they can take their road tests. As you can appreciate, novice drivers want to be able to take their road tests in a reasonable amount of time. When can we expect the improvements you recently announced to take effect?

Hon David Turnbull (Minister of Transportation): The answer is, you will immediately see improvement. We've taken action, real action, to end the backlog. We are in the process of doubling the number of road test examiners in the province. Newspaper advertisements have already appeared, and we will extend temporary driver's licences from 90 days to one year if they are caught in the backlog.

There will be an additional 325,000 tests per year when fully implemented. The current backlog is clearly unacceptable. We have taken action. We want to strengthen the actions of graduated licensing.

Mr Stewart: Thank you, Minister, for your response. As you are aware, novice drivers in urban areas have to travel to rural centres to take their road test. This often leads to additional waiting times because the novice drivers from the rural areas are competing for appointment times with the ones from the urban areas.

When will we see an immediate improvement in the availability of road test appointments, and will the wait for road test appointments in rural areas improve?

Hon Mr Turnbull: You will see immediate improvements as a result of the GTA actions. Wait times will ease. We're implementing a 1-800 number which will allow anyone in the province to phone up to see where the nearest and best—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. I couldn't hear the end of the answer. Minister?

Hon Mr Turnbull: I want to point out to the honourable members that as a result of graduated licensing, collisions are down among novice drivers by 31% and fatality and injury rates are down 24%. This is a good system. I will not compromise the speed of solving the solution with safety. Safety is the prime question. We're the fourth-safest administration in North America for highways. We want to make it even better.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): I have a question for the Minister of Education. I want to ask you today to respond to the deprivation of special education students around the province of their education.

In Hamilton alone, 275 children are not funded at all this year. There are another 275 who are only being funded because the board is taking money from some place else and depriving other students. Twenty-three kids, you will know, had to stay home this year for almost two months because of your negligence.

Here today are some of the kids affected: Timothy, Hannah and Josh. They're here today because you made them have to come here to make their case. Their education has been taken away by your formula. Timothy has a full visual impairment. He only has half-time assistance at school. That assistant cannot translate the Braille fast enough for him to get an education.

Minister, you promised Timothy and these other students an education. When are you going to start delivering on it?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education): I think we all acknowledge and recognize that for many students special education support can make a very big difference for those young people in terms of getting the education they deserve. That's why we changed the way that funding goes to boards to support those programs. We put in more money to the boards so they would have even more money to deal with this. We protected it so the boards would not spend less. We said that the boards had the flexibility to construct those programs and spend more if they wish. The Hamilton-Wentworth board has indeed spent more.

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I should also like to say that this board, as do all of the boards, has choices to make. They have more money even though there are fewer students. Those trustees are working with that board. They are making the decisions—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order, member for Sudbury.

Hon Mrs Ecker: The trustees of this board are elected to make decisions about how much more they want to put into this program, what they pay their staff, what they pay their teachers, how they organize the financial resources. That's why they are elected by their community to make those decisions.

Mr Kennedy: Before coming to the House I spoke with one of these kids, Josh. He told me to be careful about politicians who listen but don't hear. That's what we've just seen.

The Hamilton-Wentworth board is running a deficit of \$2.5 million. Minister, the Ontario public supervisory officials have told you, using your figures, that boards are already spending \$100 million. It's you and your government that have the twisted priorities. It's your government that's prepared to let Josh still be out of school right now, that is prepared to let Joyce, who is here with her daughter, Hannah, have to go to school half-time to make sure her daughter gets what should be, even in your province, an entitlement to basic education.

Even your government-appointed Education Improvement Commission said, "There are problems with special education." You need to address this now, today. I ask you not to turn these children away, not to make, as the chair of the Hamilton board says, a situation where these children are at risk, and to respond by pledging full funding for special education students in this province right now.

Hon Mrs Ecker: I would like to point out to the honourable member that we do have full funding for special education students in this province.

Interjections.

Hon Mrs Ecker: I know they don't want to hear the answer here.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Order, member for Windsor West. Minister of Education?

Hon Mrs Ecker: I share the concerns of my colleagues from Stoney Creek and Wentworth-Burlington, who've met with these parents because none of us—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I understand there are going to be occasions when all members believe passionately. But we cannot continue when I cannot hear the question and when the person answering the question cannot hear themselves think. I say to all the members that during these periods of time I will simply stand for as long as it takes until we have order in this House.

Yesterday, as you know, we got about 14 questions on. Today, we will not be getting as many questions. I will stand here for as long as it takes for us to maintain order in this House because I must be able to hear the answer.

Hon Mrs Ecker: I share with my colleagues from Stoney Creek and Wentworth-Burlington the concern that these young people are at home when they should be in school. But I would also like to point out that the boards asked for more money; they got it. They got more money last year; they got more money this year for special needs. They asked for money that was flexible; they got that too, in the SEPPA grant. They asked for money that went up as the needs and the number of students went up; they got that too.

The boards have a responsibility here. If this board is unable to allocate those funds, my ministry staff would

be very prepared to sit down with them and help them allocate them appropriately.

RAVE PARTIES

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): My question is for the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations. In recent months, there's been a great deal of media interest and community concern about youth activities at so-called rave parties. In Toronto alone, there have been at least three deaths related to drug and alcohol use and violence at these unlicensed underground parties. Many of these parties are being held in communities like my own in Scarborough. What action is the government taking to address the problems at rave parties?

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): I appreciate the question from the member from Scarborough Centre. About two weeks ago, I met with Superintendent Ron Taverner of the Toronto police, who was interested in the commitment we made as a party during the election campaign, which was reaffirmed in the throne speech, to try and assist police and municipalities in dealing with licensed premises in this province that are habitual sources of illicit drugs and other crimes being committed through these premises.

Superintendent Taverner was suggesting that his force could work with the provincial government and municipal authorities to try and have an impact on the rave parties. It's a fact that some of these events are held in licensed premises even though the tenant, for example, may not be licensed as such. I have asked the Alcohol and Gaming Commission to take a look at this to see if we can assist in any way, shape or form. I will be talking to my other cabinet colleagues with respect to a co-ordinated effort.

Ms Mushinski: Thank you, Minister, for that important response.

It's important for parents in my community to know that the safety of their children is important to this government. As you mentioned, you were working with other ministries and municipal organization to address these illegal rave parties. What tools can governments bring to bear on this problem?

Hon Mr Runciman: As the member indicated, this is a very serious problem. Superintendant Taverner is very much concerned. Organized crime is involved, proliferation of so-called designer drugs. We have 13-and 14-year-old children attending these. Parents are unaware of the dangers that their children are exposed to by attending these kinds of parties. I believe that we can assist through a variety of provincial ministries, working with health authorities, with fire officials, with a variety of municipal departments.

Laughter.

Hon Mr Runciman: The Liberal Party is laughing about this. I think this is a clear indication of their concern about the safety of young children in this province, a very clear indication—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Is the Minister finished?

Hon Mr Runciman: I will say in wrapping up that the drugs are not only illegal, they're linked to other crimes in our communities, they're destroying people's lives and this government is going to work hard to eradicate them throughout this province.

PROTECTION OF JOBS

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): My question is to the Premier. There are hundreds of workers and their families down in Thorold, workers who work at the Gallaher Thorold paper mill, who are counting on you to make sure that their jobs aren't liquidated. They were pleased when you called the receiver and when you called the Toronto-Dominion Bank, the primary creditor, to make sure the mill continues to operate.

Here today in the gallery, we have Cec Makowski—he's the vice president, Ontario region, of the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union of Canada—along with Brian Dobbie, vice president of Local 290. But back in the plant those workers are now in their second week of occupation of that plant, desperately trying to hold on to sorely needed jobs, not just for them and their families, but for the community and all of Niagara region.

Premier, will you please today pledge to commit all of your efforts and all of the resources of this government into finding a deal that will allow this plant to continue to run and keep those good jobs in Thorold and in Niagara? 1500

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I appreciate the recognition of the efforts from my office and the Ontario Jobs and Investment Board and the minister personally and the staff have taken to ensure that we can find a buyer for this plant that is intent on operating and saving jobs, not breaking the assets up. That is indeed our goal and I'm delighted to pledge to the union representatives here and to the workers and to you that we'll do everything we can to assist, obviously within the parameters of how this government operates. I am confident and very hopeful that we can conclude a deal that will save those jobs.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Supplementary.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): Premier, I am glad to hear you are confident. I want some more specificity from you, however. As you know, the pulp and paper industry is a cyclical industry. A mill can be not doing well one year and be very prosperous the next. It's also an industry in transition, as more and more recycled fibre is being used.

You also know that there is a model for repositioning jobs in the pulp and paper industry. It was the model that was used at Provincial Papers in Thunder Bay, where 500 jobs were repositioned, and those are sustainable jobs; 300 jobs at St Marys Paper in Sault Ste Marie, and that's a mill that's doing very well; 800 jobs at Spruce Falls in Kapuskasing. What happened there is that the govern-

ment I was a part of brought the banks and the financial institutions, the workers, the union and the community together to put together a repositioning plan.

Premier, is your government willing to go to Thorold and sit down and help the parties come together and reposition that mill, reposition and sustain those jobs?

Hon Mr Harris: I appreciate the interest of the leader as well. I am not sure we want to copy all the examples of the NDP, which ran up record deficits and record unemployment and drove this province into the ground, record numbers of people dependent upon welfare. I am not sure those are classic examples for any government to follow any time hopefully in the next millennium, the mistakes they made for the five years of this millennium.

I will say this: David Lindsay of the Ontario Jobs and Investment Board and officials from the ministry will be meeting, in fact tomorrow, with representatives, I know, of the receiver and, I'm not sure, of the company. We have pledged to do everything we can to save those jobs.

SAFETY FOR SENIORS

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): My question is to the minister responsible for seniors issues. In recent days and weeks we have seen numerous articles about the deplorable conditions in some retirement homes in Ontario. Yesterday, in her response to the member for Thunder Bay-Atikokan, the minister said that safety for seniors is a number one priority for this government. I was surprised by this statement because as I reviewed the throne speech, which speaks to the direction and priorities of the government for the next session, the word "seniors" was not even mentioned.

The minister also indicated that the government has worked with municipalities to help them enforce bylaws for residential homes within their communities. Of the 586 municipalities in the province of Ontario, only three have bylaws for retirement homes.

We know that squeegee kids are a priority for this government and we know the action your government intends to take to deal with them.

If ensuring the safety of seniors is a priority for your government, will the minister act immediately to investigate and reverse the deplorable conditions that exist in some retirement homes in Ontario?

Hon Helen Johns (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, minister responsible for seniors and women): I'm actually very surprised by the question because I thought I was very clear on all the things that this government had done over the last five years for seniors.

Let me once again remind the members opposite that since we were elected in June of 1999, the Minister of Health and myself have announced the Alzheimer's strategy. This is the first province across the country that has introduced a strategy, and in that we're making sure that seniors have more care, that daycare workers have more education. There's no question that we have that.

In addition to that, the other thing that's important to recognize is that we introduced the elder abuse round table in the last few weeks. What we've said on that is that abuse of seniors is against the law, and we're going to work with police to make sure that happens. I'm going to co-chair this round table with Dr Elizabeth Podnieks, who is an expert in elder abuse, and we're going to make sure that we work on things that will make seniors safe in their communities.

Mrs Dombrowsky: Yesterday I had the opportunity to have breakfast with the executive director of the Alzheimer Society of Toronto, so I'm very aware of the initiatives in that particular area, which actually have nothing to do with the conditions in retirement homes in the province.

With respect to the elder abuse round table, I am very happy to hear the minister talk about it again today but there certainly are questions, and questions within the senior representative groups in the province, around who is part of the round table panel, when will it report, what will it recommend.

My question again to the minister responsible for seniors' issues is, what action is this government prepared to take today to address the immediate and deplorable conditions in retirement homes in Ontario?

Hon Mrs Johns: I'd like to comment directly on that question. I know the member recognizes there are a number of things that governments have done with respect to the retirement industry. She should also recognize there are a number of things that municipalities have the responsibility to do and are doing.

Let me just remind you that in the city of Toronto they are now out there looking carefully at different homes. I read in the paper this morning that they're out looking at different retirement homes to make sure that services are being provided properly. In other words, the municipalities have the right to do that. They should enforce bylaws that they have and they should move forward.

I know the member across is new to the House and I'd like to just remind her of what the Liberals said when they were in power in 1989. They suggested at that time, in a report they had prepared, that the municipalities should be empowered to regulate retirement homes. We of course don't go that far—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. New question, the member for Perth-Middlesex.

Interjections.

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): If I had thought I could raise that much, I'd have spoken sooner.

WOMEN'S HEALTH

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. It was my pleasure to welcome you to Stratford recently for a very important announcement regarding women's health.

Breast cancer is an important concern for the women of Perth-Middlesex. I know that studies have shown that

organized breast screening programs for women over 50 can reduce breast cancer deaths by 30%.

Two years ago the Premier officially opened the Ontario breast screening program site at the Listowel Memorial Hospital. Last Friday, you were at Stratford General Hospital to launch a new program. In a few weeks this program will be expanded to the Jenny Trout Centre.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. I interrupt the member. Again I say to the members, I cannot hear the member's question. I need to hear the member's question, so I will be calling order.

The member for Perth-Middlesex.

Mr Johnson: In two weeks the Listowel Memorial Hospital will officially open its new breast health clinic, which will be the only one of its kind in southwestern Ontario. I'm proud the government is making women's health a priority.

Minister, can you please tell the people of Ontario about the good work being done in Perth-Middlesex and, specifically, about the Jenny Trout breast cancer screening clinic?

1510

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I did have the pleasure of being at Stratford hospital last Friday. I was very pleased at that time to open the Ontario breast screening program centre at the Stratford hospital. It is going to be expanded to include the Jenny Trout Centre. Again, it reinforces the commitment that our government has made to women's health in this province and specifically to early detection and screening for breast cancer.

The Jenny Trout Centre will be the 12th centre that has opened in the last seven months. For the women in Stratford and the surrounding area it means that up to an additional 2,000 women will be screened. Again, it will mean that fewer women will die from breast cancer.

Mr Johnson: This is great news for the people of Perth-Middlesex. It will allow my constituents to receive this important service closer to home. Could you tell the House what our government is doing across the province with respect to Ontario breast screening programs?

Hon Mrs Witmer: As I indicated, women's health is a priority for our government. Another priority of course is to ensure that we focus on prevention of illness and the promotion of wellness. Our government has made a commitment to the Ontario breast screening program. We have invested over and above \$24 million. At the end of that time period, as we screen more and more women throughout Ontario, we know that those women who are between the ages of 50 to 69 will be the beneficiaries and that one third of those women will not die as a result of breast cancer because of the screening that is being initiated. We look forward to continuing to expand this program throughout the province.

HIGHWAY SAFETY

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Today, the CAA presented 8,000 petitions to you on Highway 401 safety. There have been 26 deaths on Highway 401 in Chatham-Kent Essex. You drove carnage alley and called it a pleasant drive. Only after one of the most horrific accidents in Ontario history did you finally admit to the serious problems in this stretch of highway.

Minister, your improvements fall seriously short. Your government's twisted sense of priorities are an insult to the accident victims and their families. Fatalities in Chatham-Kent are up more than 500%. Last week, another life was lost that might have been saved by a centre barrier or photo radar on this treacherous part of the road.

Don't give me your arrogant spin on the government's record. Just tell me how much public pressure it will take and how many more deaths before you upgrade the highway with centre medians, extra lanes and fully paved shoulders on both sides.

Hon David Turnbull (Minister of Transportation): I thank the honourable member for the question. It is truly tragic that even one life is lost on our roads in this province. We are the fourth-safest highway administration in North America, but we can do better.

Everybody knows that since we have increased traffic on our highways, it is incumbent upon everybody to drive more safely. This is why I put in place a five-point action plan which went beyond what was called for by the ministry study. The five-point plan is as follows: Increased enforcement for the Chatham-Kent area. We have added 22 OPP officers, 21 new truck inspection officers for the southwestern region. We have taken immediate action on the highway. We have already commenced fully paving the right-hand shoulder three metres wide with rumble strips. We are paving—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Would the member take his seat.

Supplementary.

Mr Hoy: Minister, you tell us often that driver error is to blame for accidents. That's not exactly rocket science, is it? The question is, why do accidents become fatalities? Many safety experts tell us it's because this road is narrow and unforgiving. Fatalities are not off the chart everywhere else.

Tell me, Minister, why won't you consider photo radar to save lives on this treacherous stretch of highway?

Hon Mr Turnbull: The honourable member will understand that our government is placing the priority on roads and infrastructure. That is why this year we have the highest budget in provincial history.

I want to point out some of the support that I have received for the five-point action plan. The Ontario Provincial Police Association endorsed the crackdown on aggressive driving. The Canada Safety Council welcomes and supports the five-point program. The Insurance

Bureau of Canada supports the five-point plan for safer roads in Ontario—the Ontario Safety League.

These are real actions, but we have to ask everyone to be part of the plan to make our roads the safest. We need everybody to buy into the fact that we have to obey the laws. That is important. That is why I'm forming an advisory panel of experts—

The Speaker: Order. New question.

ACCESS TO GOVERNMENT

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton Centre): My question is to the Chair of Management Board. In the Blueprint our party made a commitment to make government work smarter, faster, better. I know that over the past few years our government has introduced a number of initiatives to help put service back into government, or actually put it into customer service for the public service.

Can you tell me, Minister, what has the government done to improve our customer service for the people of our province so far?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I want to thank the member for Brampton Centre, a member who works extremely hard on behalf of his constituents and the people of Ontario, for that insightful question.

Yes, it's true that we are making government work for the people of Ontario again in improving customer service. There are a number of initiatives that our government has undertaken to improve how and when and where the people of Ontario can access the government—some examples of using technology such as putting Publications Ontario on-line to allow the public to order documents from the Ontario Archives 24 hours a day, not just on the old government hours.

We've also introduced a number of self-serve kiosks that are conveniently located right across the province.

Interjections.

Hon Mr Hodgson: I realize the Liberals aren't interested in improving customer service, but we think that's very important. We think it's very important that government work for the people of Ontario and not the other way around.

We have also introduced 57 government information centres that are in the process of opening their doors to offer one-stop information service to the public.

1520

Mr Spina: I'm pleased that the minister indicated the opening of the government information centres. Just recently we opened one of those info centres in the city of Brampton. What we haven't seen is a clear understanding of how these government information centres can work for the benefit of the public so that they can more easily access government services.

Hon Mr Hodgson: Thank you to the member for Brampton Centre for another good question.

The opening of these centres will allow the public to have a one-stop resource place for information and puts an end to a lot of government run-around which people

have experienced, at least for the decade that the Liberals and NDP were in power.

Most importantly, in the past if you wanted to get simple registration forms you would have to go to a number of government offices. This should put an end to that and allow for one-stop shopping, so to speak. We no longer accept the answer, "This is not my department," and you have to drive five or 10 minutes down the road to get a simple form.

I'd like to point out to the people of Ontario who are interested that the staff at these counters are very dedicated to providing the best service possible and they've come up with a number of innovative ideas to make life simpler in Ontario. For example, a lot of people lose their wallets. In the past they would have had to stop at five or 10 different stops and fill out different forms. Now at these centres you can get a lost-wallet package. That idea came right from our front-line staff in Stratford and I'd just like to say thank you to them for a great idea, and there will be more to come in the years to follow.

ACCESS TO CHAMBER

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Earlier in the day there was a gentleman who was conducting what would have to be described as a peaceful protest. He was engaged in a hunger strike, obviously at risk to himself with this approach but not at risk to anybody else. He wanted to be able to come in and watch the day's proceedings. He was informed that he would not be able to come and attend in the public gallery because he had been protesting. He was in fact admitted. I want to make that clear. The security spoke to me and because I felt that he was not a risk to this place, they were prepared to admit him.

I just want to raise it nevertheless as a point of order. I appreciated the co-operation that the security provided in coming and speaking to me directly about this individual, but obviously there are many people who have concerns and want to register their protests.

I would ask if you would review the provisions that are put in place for admitting people to the public galleries. Many people who will protest and would like to come in and watch and are not putting us in any risk and have a right to hear the deliberations could be barred because they haven't made contact with an MPP. I would ask if you would review this to determine under what conditions any member of the public who may or may not have concerns with the actions of the government could be admitted to the public gallery or could be denied admission to the public gallery.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I thank the member for bringing it to my attention and I will investigate.

PETITIONS

HENLEY ROWING COURSE

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition here. It's extremely important and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the Henley rowing course in St Catharines is an outstanding rowing facility which has for several decades been the site of hundreds of international rowing competitions;

"Whereas the World Rowing Championship has been held in St Catharines in 1970 and 1999 and has been declared an outstanding success on both occasions;

"Whereas the municipal, provincial and federal governments, along with generous private donors, invested several million dollars in the upgrading of the Henley rowing course to enable the 1999 World Rowing Championship to be held in St Catharines and that as a result the Henley is a first-class rowing facility;

"Whereas the organizing committee of the World Rowing Championship, the annual Royal Canadian Henley Regatta and other prestigious regattas, has the proven expertise to operate major, international rowing competitions;

"Whereas all taxpayers in Ontario will be compelled to contribute to any financial assistance provided by the Ontario government for the Olympic bid for the city of Toronto;

"Whereas the creation of a new rowing facility outside of St Catharines for the Toronto Olympic bid would result in the unnecessary expenditure of millions of dollars to duplicate the St Catharines rowing facility;

"Whereas the rowing facility for several, recent Olympic Games has been located outside the sponsoring and host city;

"We, the undersigned, urge the government of Ontario to persuade the Toronto Olympic bid committee to propose the Henley rowing course in St Catharines as a site of the rowing competition for the 2008 Olympic Games."

I affix my signature as I'm in complete agreement with this petition.

PARAMEDICS

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-East York): This is a petition for justice for ambulance paramedics:

"To the Honourable Lieutenant Governor and the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Health this past spring amended O. Reg. 501/97 under the Ambulance Act so that paramedics are considered no longer qualified to do their job if they accumulate a minimum of six demerit points on their driving record; and

"Whereas this amended regulation has resulted in at least one paramedic being fired from employment; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Health's regulation is far more punitive and harsh than the Ministry of Transportation's, which monitors and enforces traffic safety through the Highway Traffic Act; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Transportation mails out a notice to drivers at six to nine demerit points and suspends a person's driver's licence at 15 points for a 30-day period; and

"Whereas none of the other emergency services in Ontario, eg fire and police services, are held to the same standard or punished so harshly; and

"Whereas this amended regulation is not needed since other sections of the Ambulance Act protect the public against unsafe driving and/or criminal behaviour by paramedics (specifically O. Reg. 501/97, part III, section 6, subsections (8), (9) and (10)); and

"Whereas the Ministry of Health actions are blatantly unjust and punitive, and they discriminate against paramedics;

"We, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, beg leave to petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately eliminate any references to the accumulation of demerit points during employment from O. Reg. 501/97 under the Ambulance Act (specifically, part III, section 6, subsection 7), thereby allowing the Highway Traffic Act to apply to paramedics; and

"To order the immediate reinstatement of paramedics who have been fired under the regulation."

Mr Speaker, I am in total agreement with this and will affix my signature to it.

HOUSING PROJECT

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Southwest): I have a petition signed by a number of my constituents in Scarborough Southwest which reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the city of Toronto is making plans to move 60 to 70 men into 1673 Kingston Road, and;

"Whereas they are doing this without community consultation and without regard to the safety of children in the area;

"We, the undersigned, petition to have this project stopped immediately."

I have affixed my name to this petition.

AIR QUALITY

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the effluent coming from the commercial alcohol ethanol plant is creating a noxious smell in the former city of Chatham, in the municipality of Chatham-Kent, which has a nauseating impact on the citizens who breathe it, and;

"Whereas the citizens of Chatham have repeatedly brought this problem to the attention of the Ontario Ministry of the Environment and the former MPP for Chatham-Kent, and;

"Whereas the former MPP for Chatham-Kent and the Ministry of the Environment indicated that Commercial Alcohols was given and eight-month period to correct the problem, which time elapsed on July 1999, and the problem has not been remedied, and;

"Whereas the current Environmental Protection Act, section 5(6) clearly states: No person shall cause or permit to be caused the emission of any air contaminant to such an extent or degree as may cause discomfort to persons, cause loss of enjoyment of normal use of property, and interfere with the normal conduct of business,' and;

"Whereas the citizens of Chatham-Kent Essex believe that they have the right to clean air and that Commercial Alcohols Inc must be subject to the environmental law in place to protect citizens;

"Therefore, it be resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the measures contained in regulation 346 of the Environmental Protection Act be immediately enforced on Commercial Alcohols Inc to ensure that the citizens of Chatham and the surrounding area have fresh air to breathe, free from the noxious odours that are spewed by the ethanol plant located on Bloomfield Road in the westerly outskirts of the former city of Chatham in the municipality of Chatham-Kent, and we ask for the support of all members of the Legislature."

I affix my name to this petition.

1530

COURT DECISION

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I am reading a petition on behalf of my constituents, Sylvia Jasper-Fayer, Renee Boulma, Elaine Vantarting, Maria Easterbrook and a number of constituents.

"We, the undersigned, wish to express our support for the use of section 33 of the Constitution Act, 1982, to stop changes to the Ontario Family Law Act as a result of the *M v H* decision."

I know this petition isn't in the proper format, but out of respect for my constituents I do submit it for the record.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition that reads as follows:

"Whereas the hospitals in the Niagara region that have incurred deficits as a result of underfunding by the Harris government are being forced to cut services to patients even more than in the past few years;

"Whereas services for patients in our hospitals have already been cut as a result of budget slashing by the Conservative government of Mike Harris;

"Whereas Niagara hospitals may be compelled to impose user fees and increase user fees already in effect;

"Therefore, be it resolved that the Harris government provide significantly increased funding to Niagara hospi-

tals' operating budgets to avoid further cuts to patient services and to restore services that have been eliminated in the past."

I affix my signature to this petition as I am in complete agreement with its contents.

MARRIAGE

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey): Mr Speaker, congratulations on your new job.

I have a petition signed by around 200 people from my area. It is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the majority of Ontarians understand the concept of marriage as only the voluntary union of a single male and a single female;

"Whereas it is the duty of the Legislature to ensure that marriage, as it has always been known and understood in Ontario, be preserved and protected;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature to use all possible legislative and administrative measures, including invoking section 33 of the Canadian Constitution (the notwithstanding clause), to protect marriage in law so that marriage can only be entered into between a single male and a single female."

TAXATION

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): A local group called RATH, Residents Against Tax Hikes, continues to gather petitions titled "Freeze Taxes and Restructure Government."

"Whereas the Haldimand-Norfolk region has downloaded a 17% tax hike on residents, without attempting to cut its own costs; and

"Whereas for the past 25 years there have been meetings, petitions, referenda and studies calling for a restructuring of regional government; and

"Whereas 80% of the residents did not want regional government in the first place, and in recent referendums, 75% of the residents of the city of Nanticoke and 60% of the residents of the town of Simcoe voted against retaining regional government; and

"Whereas residents in the region do not want and clearly cannot afford two levels of municipal government;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully request that provincial legislation be passed to freeze taxes and restructure government in Haldimand-Norfolk, and institute a form of restructured local government in keeping with the wishes and the financial means of the local residents."

I hereby affix my name to this petition.

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): We continue to receive hundreds of petitions related to the northern health travel grant.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the northern health travel grant was introduced in 1987 in recognition of the fact that northern Ontario residents are often forced to receive treatment outside their own communities because of the lack of available services; and

"Whereas the Ontario government acknowledged that the costs associated with that travel should not be fully borne by those residents and therefore that financial support should be provided by the Ontario government through the travel grant program; and

"Whereas travel, accommodation and other costs have escalated sharply since the program was first put in place, particularly in the area of air travel; and

"Whereas the Ontario government has provided funds so that southern Ontario patients needing care at the Northwestern Ontario Cancer Centre have all their expenses paid while receiving treatment in the north, which creates a double standard for health care delivery in the province; and

"Whereas northern Ontario residents should not receive a different level of health care nor be discriminated against because of their geographical locations;

"Therefore we, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, petition the Ontario Legislature to acknowledge the unfairness and inadequacy of the northern health travel grant program and commit to a review of the program with a goal of providing 100% funding of the travel costs for residents needing care outside their communities until such time as that care is available in our communities."

I support this very strongly. I am very proud to add my name to this petition.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): Further petitions, the member for London West.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Not quite.

The Acting Speaker: I'm sorry. I looked over there a few minutes ago—

Mr Christopherson: Thank you, Speaker. I certainly can't argue that you've got some kind of bias against the party I'm a member of, but I would ask you to remember this corner of the place.

The Acting Speaker: OK. The member for Hamilton West.

Mr Christopherson: Thank you and, by the way, congratulations on your ascension to the Chair.

PARAMEDICS

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): "To the Honourable Lieutenant Governor and the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Health this past spring amended O. Reg. 501/97 under the Ambulance Act so that paramedics are considered no longer qualified to do their job if they accumulate a minimum of six demerit points on their driving record; and

"Whereas this amended regulation has resulted in at least one paramedic being fired from employment ... "

The number now is actually six, Speaker, two from Hamilton.

"Whereas the Ministry of Health's regulation is far more punitive and harsh than the Ministry of Transportation, which monitors and enforces traffic safety through the Highway Traffic Act; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Transportation mails out a notice to drivers at six to nine demerit points and suspends a person's driver's licence at 15 points for a 30-day period; and

"Whereas none of the other emergency services in Ontario, eg fire and police services, are held to the same standard or punished so harshly; and

"Whereas this amended regulation is not needed since other sections of the Ambulance Act protect the public against unsafe driving and/or criminal behaviour by paramedics (specifically O. Reg. 501/97, part III, section 6, subsections 8, 9 and 10); and

"Whereas the Ministry of Health actions are blatantly unjust and punitive, and they discriminate against paramedics;

"Therefore we, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, beg leave to petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately eliminate any references to the accumulation of demerit points during employment from O. Reg. 501/97 under the Ambulance Act (specifically, part III, section 6, subsection 7), thereby allowing the Highway Traffic Act to apply to paramedics; and

"To order the immediate reinstatement of paramedics who have been fired under this unjust regulation."

I proudly add my name to those of these petitioners in support of the paramedics.

PALLIATIVE CARE

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): Further petitions, the member for London West.

Mr Bob Wood (London West): Mr Speaker, may I first congratulate you on your election as Deputy Chair. I know that you're going to serve the House well.

I have a petition that reads as follows:

"Whereas most Ontario residents require adequate access to effective hospice and palliative care in times of need; and

"Whereas meeting the needs of Ontarians of all backgrounds and ages for relief of preventable pain and suffering, as well as the provision of emotional and spiritual support, should be a priority for our health care system; and

"Whereas this Legislature resolved, unanimously, to support the resolution introduced by Bob Wood, MPP, calling for a hospice palliative care bill of rights and a comprehensive province-wide system of hospice and palliative care;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and the government to quickly appoint the task force needed to fulfill this great need. Ontarians needing care must receive the best possible treatment,

care, protection and comfort. The provision of care by family members and community volunteers must be encouraged and supported.

"The task force should fully consider the experience of Ontario's professional and community experts in hospice and palliative care, from every professional field and medical specialty involved in the provision of hospice palliative care, and as well, consult with Ontario citizens, of all backgrounds, about their needs;

"The task force should determine the best medical principles and most advanced methods for the enhancement of our right to life and care, with special attention to developing effective medical and procedural safeguards for those who can, or who can no longer, decide issues of medical care for themselves."

1540

VISITORS

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): I would like to inform the members of the Legislative Assembly that we have in the Speaker's gallery today mayors from the Alto-Alentejo and Baixo-Alentejo regions of Portugal, accompanied by Mr John Ferreira, Toronto. Please join me in welcoming our guests.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

DÉBAT SUR LE DISCOURS DU TRÔNE

Resuming the adjourned debate on the motion for an address in reply to the speech of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor at the opening of the session.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): The leader of the official opposition.

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. Let me tell you that it's good to be back. I would have preferred to be sitting on your right-hand side, but that was not to be this time.

I want to take the opportunity to congratulate you, Mr Speaker, in your capacity as a new deputy speaker, as well as Michael Brown, a member of our caucus, and of course our new Speaker upon his election. You've all been entrusted with the very special responsibility of protecting the rights and privileges of every member of this House, but I would say you have a very special responsibility to ensure that the rights of members of the opposition parties are recognized.

So I say to you, Mr Speaker, and through you to our elected Speaker and the other deputy speaker, that you have our full support on every occasion and in each and every instance where you rule in our favour.

I want at the outset to thank the people of my riding, the people of Ottawa South, for once again placing their faith in me. It is an honour and a privilege for me to be back here in a position to serve my constituents.

Although I have other obligations, particularly as leader of my party, I don't forget where I come from, who sent me and what I was sent to do. I think it would serve all of us well to remember that, first and foremost, our duties here are owed to our constituents.

I also want to take the opportunity to congratulate all members on their election or re-election. I congratulate the Premier. I congratulate the government. It's not easy to put your name forward. It's not easy on us and it's not easy on our families. But we do this because we care about our families, about our communities, about our province and about our country.

"Care" is a very important word and I think it would serve us all well from time to time to remind ourselves that the reason we get into politics in the first place is quite simply because we care. From my perspective, the very best way to show that we care about Ontario is by taking care to ensure that all Ontarians find here in our province a ladder of opportunity to climb to success. As for those in our province who can't climb—our sick, our poor, our children, our frail elderly, our homeless and our disabled—all these, from my perspective, we should embrace and care for, knowing that quite simply that is the right thing to do, and understanding in our heart of hearts that, but for fate, we would be them and they would be us.

My father had the seat before me. I had the opportunity to observe him in his role as an MPP and prior to that as a locally elected representative on our school board. He did that for a dozen years or so. My observations made me absolutely convinced that there was no way I ever wanted to put my head in the political wringer. There was no way I ever wanted to seek political office, for all the usual negatives that are connected with political office today in Ontario and indeed North America. We seem to have to contend with so much cynicism felt for all things and all persons political. We're called to spend a tremendous amount of time away from our homes—politics can be a jealous mistress—and we're often called upon in our very diverse society with so many freedoms to reconcile the seemingly irreconcilable. That means politics is particularly challenging.

But when my father passed away very suddenly, one of the things that he used to impress upon me and my brothers and sisters—our mother spoke to this as well—he used to tell us that it would never, ever be good enough simply to get up in the morning and go to work and pay taxes and that we all had a responsibility to find some way to build upon those successes that had been handed down to us by previous generations on a silver platter.

One of the things I realized as time went on was that there were many things that only government can do to help people. I realized that government had an important and essential role to play in our lives. It does that by providing things like good schools and hospitals, a clean environment, safe highways and safe communities. So I say to the members opposite and I say to the Premier as well, there is no shame in being a part of government.

There is no need for duplicity. You cannot at the same time sit on your right-hand side and not be government. You are the government and you should take pride in that. You should recognize that government is fundamentally not about policies, programs and budgets; it's all about people and it's about improving life for people, especially those people who face challenges that are simply too big for them to overcome on their own.

When I was first elected to the Legislature as a rookie, I sat over there in the farthest reaches of this Legislature and I felt for sure that on a clear day I could see the Speaker. I thought to myself when I first arrived and I occupied that seat: "How will I ever exert any influence in this place? How could I ever help the folks back home?"

But as a rookie MPP, I succeeded in doing a few things of which I'm very proud. I changed the law in Ontario to make it easier for people to make contributions to our food banks, I worked hard to ensure that CPR was taught in all of my community high schools so that our young people will be equipped with the skill to save lives, and I was responsible for bringing paramedics to Ottawa. I did all that from a seat in the back row.

I say that so that all members here, but particularly backbenchers in the government and others who don't sit in the front row, understand that they can exert a very real influence for good, no matter which seat you occupy here. Don't get caught in the Queen's Park trap of thinking that only the Premier and cabinet can get things done around here. We, all of us, each and every one of us, have an opportunity to make a difference and help people, and we should, all of us, seize that opportunity.

Mr Speaker, you will have noticed that since the Legislature last met there have been a few changes. I'm not talking about the carpet here; I'm talking about my party. I'm pleased to report that my party was the only party to have its caucus grow in size as the result of the last election. While I'm disappointed that we fell short of our goal, I am very proud of the fact that we have 35 members in our caucus today, that we are a team that combines energy with experience. We have nine new members, nine former cabinet ministers and 26 veteran.

1550

What I want to do now, Speaker, is take the opportunity to introduce the nine new members of our caucus to you, to this House and to Ontario.

George Smitherman is the new member of Parliament for Toronto Centre-Rosedale. He has been given responsibility as the Liberal GTA critic and our science and technology critic. Prior to his election, George served as a senior Toronto adviser to the Honourable David Collenette and the Honourable Herb Gray. He was also chief of staff to Toronto mayor Barbara Hall.

Steve Peters is my new member for Elgin-Middlesex-London. Prior to Steve's election, he was the popular three-term mayor of St Thomas. As our advocate for the disabled, Steve is already working hard in leading our fight for a real and meaningful Ontarian's With Disabilities Act.

Ernie Parsons—Landslide Parsons, as he's affectionately known in our caucus—is the new member for Prince Edward-Hastings. When I looked to my caucus to find someone to give responsibility for the important training portfolio, the choice was perfectly clear. A professional engineer, Ernie not only taught technology courses at Loyalist College for 25 years; he was also a trustee for 17 years on the local school board, serving as chair for six of those years.

Dave Levac is my new member for Brant and our Solicitor General critic. Dave's a pillar in his community. His many years of community involvement were officially recognized when he was named Brant county's citizen of the year quite recently. Prior to his election, Dave worked as an elementary school teacher and principal for 20 years.

Leona Dombrowsky is the new member for Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington. One of the very first things she may want to do is introduce a bill shortening the name of her riding. Leona has been given responsibility as the Liberal caucus seniors critic, a task which she has warmed to with her typical zeal. Prior to her election, Leona served as chair of her local separate school board for five consecutive terms.

Caroline Di Cocco is the new member for Sarnia-Lambton. A municipal councillor in Sarnia, Caroline worked hard to build her reputation as someone who fought to ensure that taxpayers were getting value for their hard-earned tax dollars. A former music teacher, Caroline has always been a strong advocate for the arts, and continues to be as our party's culture critic.

Michael Bryant is the new member for St Paul's and the Liberal Attorney General critic. Michael is a lawyer, Mr Speaker, but I can assure you that he does have redeeming qualities. I say that because I'm a lawyer. As such, I'm entitled to make those kinds of jokes. Michael is a graduate of both Harvard Law School and Osgoode Hall, and he served as a law clerk at the Supreme Court of Canada prior to practising and teaching law.

J'ai le plaisir aussi de vous présenter Claudette Boyer. Claudette est la nouvelle députée d'Ottawa-Vanier et elle occupe les fonctions de critique de notre parti aux Affaires francophones et à la Condition féminine. Claudette est la première Franco-Ontarienne à devenir députée de l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario. Avant son élection, Claudette faisait partie du conseil d'administration de l'Association canadienne-française de l'Ontario. Claudette a également été conseillère au sein du Conseil de l'éducation d'Ottawa et présidente de sa section locale de la Fédération des enseignants francophones.

Marie Bountrogianni is the new member for Hamilton Mountain. Prior to her election, Marie was the chief psychologist for the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board. Marie is perfectly suited as our colleges and universities critic, as she has studied at the University of Toronto, Waterloo, and she's taught courses at McMaster, Sir Wilfrid Laurier, Seneca College and Ryerson.

I take a great deal of pride in introducing my nine new Liberal members to this Legislature. I said earlier that these nine new members join a team that combines energy with experience. I'm proud to say that they also join a team with a track record of putting forward positive solutions to Ontario's problems. Take, for example, the following initiatives of Liberal MPPs:

Richard Patten and his proposals for mental health reforms.

Pat Hoy and his innovative approach to improving school bus safety for Ontario children.

Monte Kwinter and his private member's bill to recognize alternative medicines and the role they can play today.

Rick Bartolucci and his tough legislation to tackle the exploitation of children as prostitutes.

Sandra Pupatello, who worked with me on our First Steps children's proposals that first proposed family medical leave in Ontario and legislation to stop the early eviction of women and their babies from hospitals after birth.

Mike Colle and his campaign for red-light cameras to save lives on Ontario streets.

Jean-Marc Lalonde and his work to stop the discrimination against Ontario construction workers in the province of Quebec.

We have put forward and will continue to put forward these kinds of solutions. In fact, just a few weeks ago, I'm pleased to report that our health critic, Lyn McLeod, released a package of proposals to bring doctors to our underserviced communities. The only thing we lack now is a government that is willing to listen and to act on our solutions.

I can tell you that I had hoped for a signal in the throne speech that there were going to be other changes around here. I had hoped we would have a government that was willing to listen and to work together to make this province a better place for all Ontarians.

J'espérais que le gouvernement serait prêt à écouter et à travailler avec nous tous pour faire de la province un meilleur endroit pour vivre, travailler et élever une famille. J'espérais qu'après quatre mois complets de planification, le discours du trône aurait promis de signaler une nouvelle approche.

I had hoped that after more than four full months of planning, the throne speech would have signalled a new approach that would have contained a vision for taking Ontario boldly into the new millennium, that would have spoken to the real concerns of the people of Ontario. Unfortunately, the throne speech did none of those things. It was an empty throne speech from an arrogant government.

The throne speech was proof that this government is too arrogant to even acknowledge Ontarians' real problems. There was much talk in the throne speech of crackdowns, but we on this side of the House ask: Where was the crackdown on hospital deficits? Where was the crackdown on sky-high tuition? Where was the crackdown on the carnage on our highways, on the gridlock on

our streets? Where was the crackdown on the homelessness in our communities?

Only four months into its mandate, the government is already running on empty: empty promises, empty rhetoric and an empty throne speech. The throne speech is chock full of empty phrases like "task force," "action plan" and "demonstration project."

More than anything else, the record of this government since the election screams arrogance. The throne speech talks about accountability, but for three weeks Mike Harris held onto Steven Gilchrist when he was under police investigation for allegations that taxpayers weren't allowed access to him without going through his fundraiser and lawyer.

1600

The throne speech talks about protecting taxpayers, but since the election the Premier has increased the size of his cabinet. Originally, it was a cabinet that was the size of 19; now it's 25.

Mike Harris has doubled the size of his office staff.

He's resurrected former Speaker Al McLean, showering him with patronage after he left this Legislature under a cloud of sexual harassment.

Mike Harris has given political staff 30% pay hikes after wasting over \$100 million in taxpayers' money on partisan advertising prior to the last election.

The throne speech says the government works for the people because this is a democracy. But this is the government that allowed the people's Legislature to sit for just seven days during the past 10 months.

The throne speech talks about acceptable health care. But this is the government that cut \$870 million from Ontario hospitals, affecting the quality of care and leaving more than half of our hospitals with deficits totalling more than \$100 million. This is the government that more and more is refusing to take responsibility for the health care of our sick who are not found inside a hospital.

The throne speech talks about hiring nurses, but this is the government that's fired thousands of nurses, leaving Ontario with the fewest nurses per capita in Canada and, more importantly, leaving Ontarians waiting for hours in hospital hallways and corridors without proper care.

The throne speech talks about quality education, but this is the government that has taken tuition through the roof, forced the closure of schools and done nothing to address the crying need for special education.

The actions of two Hamilton MPPs in the face of a desperate community need I find particularly telling. In the middle of October—I'm not sure if the circumstances obtain to this very day—23 students with special needs in Ontario were still not attending school. The parents of Hamilton-Wentworth and their school board appealed to the local government MPPs for help. They were looking for additional funding to hire more educational assistants.

Do you know how the local MPPs responded to this plea for help? Instead of going to bat for the boards and the kids and the parents, they demanded that an audit be conducted of the school board affairs. It seems to me that these members forgot that they're here to represent the

interests of those parents and of those children and of those duly elected school board representatives.

The throne speech talks about protecting the environment. But this is the government that gutted environmental protection, making Ontario the second-worst polluter in North America, after Texas.

In a wonderful display of both arrogance and hypocrisy, the Premier recently sided with the US Environmental Protection Agency because it has brought in new, strict emission laws. These new laws will be helpful to Ontario because, as everybody knows, the US is responsible for 50% of our smog. But what Mike Harris won't talk about is the fact that Ontario's own coal-fired generating stations do not meet the new American EPA standards. We had a plan that we put forward during the course of the campaign. We had a plan to convert coal-fired electrical generating stations in Ontario to gas-fired.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I don't want to put you on the spot in the time you have been in the chair, and I think it may have slipped by you, but I think "hypocrisy" may be out of order, accusing the government of being hypocrites.

The Acting Speaker: I would ask the leader of the official opposition to withdraw the word "hypocrisy," if he would.

Mr McGuinty: I withdraw it, Speaker.

The throne speech talks about a balanced budget, and apparently soon, but this is a government that has borrowed \$10 billion at prime-plus on international markets for tax cuts and added \$23 billion to our long-term debt. I don't claim to be prescient, I don't claim that I can see into the future, but I can say with absolute certainty that Ontario's children will not thank Mike Harris for borrowing \$10 billion to give today's tax-paying generation some kind of break.

The throne speech talks about roads, but there is no additional money in what we call the "super fraud fund," so there is no end in sight to the gridlock that costs our economy an estimated \$3 billion each and every year, and there is no plan to improve safety on the 401 and major roadways.

The throne speech talks about the disabled, but what it says is really an insult to that community. After five years, four promises and three ministers, Mike Harris's only commitment was to introduce a new action plan in this session. Now, whether you call it a plan or an action plan, we in this Legislature know what that means. It's a euphemism for doing nothing of substance. Ontario's disabled don't want an action plan; they want legislation. To remind the Premier, he did not promise an action plan; he promised legislation. So the question that I ask on behalf of Ontario's disabled community is: Why not just get on with the job, be the government, be the Premier and introduce legislation?

Monsieur le Président, j'ai dit à nos partisans le soir de l'élection que notre bataille n'était pas terminée, que nous devons continuer à nous battre pour ces choses sur lesquelles les familles de l'Ontario doivent pouvoir

compter : de bonnes écoles, de bons hôpitaux, de bons soins de santé, un bon réseau d'enseignement, un gouvernement honnête qui partage leurs inquiétudes et qui travaille avec eux pour trouver des solutions à leurs problèmes. En leur nom, je répète cet après-midi la promesse que j'ai faite le soir de l'élection : notre bataille n'est pas terminée. J'ai le grand privilège de mener cette lutte, la lutte de la population, au nom de tous les Ontariens et Ontariennes.

I had one of my assistants go through the throne speech and scan it at some length. It seems to me that in the grand scheme of things one of the things you want to do with a throne speech, because it really is an exceptional opportunity for the government—it's not a bill, it's not crafted by lawyers and it's not designed to speak to an immediate problem. It's a real opportunity for a government to lay out its priorities, and maybe more than that, it's an opportunity to lift all Ontarians up and to remind us of how we are connected, of how we've got to work together to meet the challenges of the day, of how important it is to reach out to people who find themselves in need. It should be filled with positive references, not negatives.

I went through the throne speech in some detail, and we find three negative references to the federal government. I assume there is much more of that to come. There are three references to mandatory or zero-tolerance policies. There are three references to crackdowns. There are nine references to discipline programs.

1610

There are five references to real people. Real people, to take a close look at the throne speech, are people who have found success in one way, shape or form or another. I'm not sure this government considers people in need to be real people. Our homeless are real people. Our disabled are real people. People who can't work because they're sick are real people. Children growing up at risk, are they real people? Our frail elderly, are they real people? If you follow this throne speech through to its logical conclusion in the eyes of this government, those people are not real people.

The other thing you find again in this throne speech is the Premier's passionate desire to turn government into a business operation. He talks about the need to ensure that we're looking after our customers or clients. That's not what government is all about, Speaker, and I know you understand that. Government is not a business. There's no doubt we can learn certain things from business—we can learn how to deliver services more efficiently—but ultimately government is not a business.

The purpose of business is to look after business. The purpose of business is to ensure that there is a fair return for the investors in the business. The purpose of business is to deal with those people who bring something to you. That's not the purpose of government. The purpose of government, at least one special responsibility of government, is to ensure that we're looking after people who have difficulty looking after themselves.

That is not something we shrink from as Liberals. I know it's high fashion in many circles today to speak about the fiscal aspects of government—and it is important that we get our finances under control, it is important that we understand taxes are an issue—but that does not absolve us of our continuing responsibility to make sure that each and every Ontarian finds opportunity here.

If we think about it for a time, those of us who find ourselves in this Legislature, those of us who have arrived in Ontario, those of us who enjoy success throughout this province, have been able to do so, by and large, because we had opportunity there. We had a ladder we could climb. One of those rungs was good health care. Another rung might be good public education. Another rung might be affordable college and university. Those are the kinds of things that have shaped our province. Those are the real sources of our strength. Government has a continuing responsibility from our perspective to strengthen that ladder and, at the same time, to understand that from time to time there will be people who can't climb. We embrace that responsibility as well. That's not something we shrink from either.

I told our supporters on election night that our fight is not over. We've got to continue to fight for those things that Ontario families simply need to be able to count on, things like good schools and good hospitals, good health care, good education and an honest government that shares their concerns and works together with all Ontarians to find solutions to our collective problems.

Over 40% of Ontarians voted Liberal. Over 1.8 million Ontarians voted Liberal in the last election and more than half of Ontario voters said, "We want change." They said they don't want any more cuts to our health care. They don't want any more cuts to our education and they want the persistent fighting to grind to a halt. They said they want us to start working together so that, together, we might embrace all of the opportunities that the 21st century holds for us and our children. On their behalf I repeat my election night pledge once again this October afternoon: Our fight is not over and it is my great privilege to lead this fight, the people's fight on behalf of all Ontarians.

Mr Speaker, I have a motion.

I, seconded by Mrs Pupatello, move an amendment to the government motion on the throne speech by adding the following thereto:

Whereas the throne speech was an empty speech from an arrogant government; and

Whereas the Harris government clearly wished to avoid taking responsibility for its decisions to double the size of the Premier's office, give 30% raises to its top political staff and shower patronage on the likes of Al McLean by allowing the Legislature to sit only seven days in the first 10 months of this year; and

Whereas the Harris government failed to signal a new approach, failed to outline a vision for taking Ontario boldly into the new millennium and failed to address the real concerns of Ontario residents; and

Whereas the throne speech was silent on such important issues as hospital deficits, sky-high tuition, carnage on our highways, gridlock on our streets and homelessness in our communities; and

Whereas the Harris government is clearly out of touch and its throne speech proved it has the wrong priorities;

This House profoundly regrets that the Harris government continues to act in such an arrogant manner on an agenda which will continue to cause significant hardship for our youngest, our oldest, our sickest and our least fortunate in society.

The Acting Speaker: Mr McGuinty has moved an amendment:

Whereas the throne speech was an empty speech from an arrogant government; and

Interjection: Dispense.

Interjections: No, go ahead.

The Acting Speaker: Whereas the Harris government clearly wished to avoid taking responsibility for its decisions to double the size of the Premier's office, give 30% raises to its top political staff and shower patronage on the likes of Al McLean by allowing the Legislature to sit only seven days in the first 10 months of this year; and

Whereas the Harris government failed to signal a new approach, failed to outline a vision for taking Ontario boldly into the new millennium and failed to address the real concerns of Ontario residents; and

Whereas the throne speech was silent on such important issues as hospital deficits, sky-high tuition, carnage on our highways, gridlock on our streets and homelessness in our communities; and

Whereas the Harris government is clearly out of touch and its throne speech proved it has the wrong priorities;

This House profoundly regrets that the Harris government continues to act in such an arrogant manner on an agenda which will continue to cause significant hardship for our youngest, our oldest, our sickest and our least fortunate in society.

Further debate?

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): As is the tradition of this place, I move adjournment of the debate.

The Acting Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Orders of the day.

Hon Chris Stockwell: Mr Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to allow the NDP to stand down their lead debate on the throne speech reply, and debate would resume this evening.

The Acting Speaker: Unanimous consent has been requested for the third party to stand down their leadoff speech. Do we have unanimous consent? Agreed.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I move the House adjourn until 6:30 this evening.

The Acting Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried. This House stands adjourned until 6:30 this evening.

The House adjourned at 1621.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

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XI
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Première session, 37^e législature

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Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk
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Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 26 October 1999

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 26 octobre 1999

The House met at 1830.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

Resuming the adjourned debate on the amendment to the motion for an address in reply to the speech of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor at the opening of the session.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): Further debate.

Mr Wayne Wettkaufer (Kitchener Centre): I'd like to advise the House that I will be sharing my time with the member for York North and the member for Peterborough.

Mr Speaker, I'd like to start by congratulating you on your appointment. It's a privilege to have you in the chair.

Hon Rob Sampson (Minister of Correctional Services): Where's the gown?

Mr Wettkaufer: Yes, where is the gown, Mr Speaker?

I would like to also congratulate you on your re-election to this House. I know you are as proud to have been re-elected to sit in this House and to serve your riding as I am to serve the people of my riding.

You will be interested to learn that I return to this House with the support of 51% of the decided voters of my riding. That was overwhelming to me on election night. To come from a riding where the populace has been fairly split on election nights in the past and to receive such overwhelming support warms my heart. But it reconfirmed for me the understanding of how inter-linked our provincial government is in the everyday lives of voters, families, friends and loved ones. It's an honour for me to take my place in this House again, Mr Speaker. I want it to be known to you that I look forward to standing in this place with the intent of using every ounce of positive energy I possess to do the best job I possibly can for the constituents of my riding.

Interjections.

Mr Wettkaufer: It's bad enough to be heckled by the members of the opposition, but to be heckled by my own colleagues?

I want to also congratulate the opposition parties for the calibre of candidates they had in the last election campaign in my riding. The candidates represented their views very well, but the fact is that more voters suppor-

ted my views and the views and policies of our party than supported the views and policies of all of the other candidates combined. I received more voter support than any candidate before. For this I am truly thankful and I do want to extend my thanks to all the members of my riding.

But I also want to take the opportunity to thank the Leader of the Opposition and the former Liberal health critic, who came into my riding during the election campaign. Why do I want to thank them? I want to thank them because without them my job of getting re-elected would have been much harder.

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): Now you're getting into the real stuff.

Mr Wettkaufer: Now I'm getting into the real stuff. You've got it.

I would like to advise the former Liberal health critic, for instance, that he divided the professional health care workers in my riding into two groups. One group is still laughing over the level of amateurism that he presented during the election campaign—I can't even read this; I've got prompt notes here and I can't even read them—and also the number of inaccuracies he presented during the campaign. But he also had another level of professional health care critics who are shaking their heads in bewilderment at some of the statements he made.

Now, I can't say in this House, Mr Speaker, that he deliberately distorted the facts. I can't say that. You know that I can't say that. You would make me withdraw it if I said it. However, the members of the professional health care community told me many times, over and over again, that they could not get over what they thought were distortions. So it's with great relish that I thank—

Interjection.

Mr Wettkaufer: I didn't say it.

It's with great relish that I thank the former Liberal health critic, but I also want to thank the Liberal leader. He came into the riding—

Mr Morley Kells (Etobicoke-Lakeshore): How many times?

Mr Wettkaufer: Let's not worry about how many times he came into the riding. After the first time he came into the riding, I'm sure he was very embarrassed. You see, he had set up a media event with one of the local hospitals, with local nurses, and he had all these cameras trained on him as he came in. I remember watching this on TV. He was walking up the aisle and he walked into the room in which we were to be assembled

hundreds of people. Imagine his embarrassment. No one was there. The room was empty.

You know that I am a very compassionate, sympathetic person, and I felt for him. I felt very dearly for him. But that really helped me get re-elected, so I do thank him. What I couldn't get over was that nobody from his own party, from his own Liberal association, was there. All I could say was that that pointed out the dismal failure that was the Liberals' health policy during the election campaign, and leading up to the election campaign, for that matter.

You see, when I got elected in 1995, it was my number one priority to improve the health care system in our riding, a riding which had been totally neglected by the two previous governments. It is not neglected any more.

Since the election campaign, the Leader of the Opposition has appointed a member of his party to shadow my riding and to shadow the Cambridge riding, represented by Mr Martiniuk. Do you know that this member of the Liberal Party admitted to the media that he knew nothing about my riding? That is arrogance. That is the height of arrogance. The Leader of the Opposition, who has accused us of being arrogant, appoints a member of his own caucus to shadow a riding which is extremely well served, and his own member admits that he knows nothing about my riding. Imagine the effrontery to the people of my riding, a riding that I enjoy representing, a riding whose citizens I love.

In all fairness to the voters in my riding, the failure of the Liberals' policy when they were in power—let's just look at what they didn't do. They didn't do anything with cardiac care. They didn't do anything with cancer care. They didn't do anything with an MRI. They didn't do anything with long-term-care beds. They didn't do anything with any psychiatric beds. Absolutely nothing.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): Well, we're not in government.

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Mr Wetlaufer: You were in government for five years and you did nothing. Oh, I'm sorry, you did do something. You had 33 tax increases. I forgot about that: 33 tax increases. How could I possibly forget that?

We haven't had 33 tax increases; our government has had 99 tax decreases. We have a bolstered economy, and what is that economy doing? Tax decreases are boosting the economy of this province. We have the best economy in all of the G7. We have improved trade, and what is that doing? It means more jobs. It means more revenue for the province, and what does more revenue do? Revenue means that we can spend more money on health care, we can spend more money on cancer facilities, on MRI, on long-term care, on psychiatric beds.

The quality of services in my riding in health care, which was allowed for deteriorate for 10 years, is now on the upswing. I thank my colleagues for their assistance in this: Gerry Martiniuk, the member for Cambridge, and

Elizabeth Witmer, the Minister of Health and member for Kitchener-Waterloo riding.

The standard of the declining facilities in our region prompted one prominent physician in 1994 to say that the hospital emergency wards in our hospitals in the region of Waterloo were equivalent to Third World standards. He said that prior to our coming into power. Imagine, a community that is so important, a community that has a GDP equivalent to the province of New Brunswick, a \$14-billion GDP, and we had emergency wards equivalent to Third World standards during the terms of the Liberal and the NDP governments. Well, we don't any more. It was incomprehensible then, and now we have an admirable record of achievement.

Mr Speaker, I wonder if you can remember. Remember I said the Liberals increased taxes? Do you remember how many times I said? Was it 10 times? No. Was it 20 times? No. Was it 30 times? Believe it or not, no, it wasn't. It was more than 30 times. It was 33 times. Keep that in mind. The Liberal government, between 1985 and 1990, raised taxes 33 times. That was even more than the NDP government.

Did the Liberal Party run on that kind of platform? Did they run on, "Vote for us and we'll increase your taxes 33 times"? No, they didn't do that, but they inflicted it on Ontario. What a travesty.

Then along came the NDP. They increased taxes 32 times. Do you remember that, Mr Speaker? I know you remember that—32 times. Oh, did we ever have a great economy when the NDP was in power. Didn't we have a great economy? Yeah, we sure did. Boy, what a recession we had. Jobs went down like that.

What has happened under our government? Jobs have gone up: 517,000 net new jobs. Keep that figure in mind, because that's going to come up time and time again over the next month. After next month I'll bet you that number will have increased too.

What has happened as a result of that? We have a good economy. We have citizens with hope. Do you know, as a result of that the Premier today announced that we'll have a taxpayer protection act? I know that the people of my riding have great hopes that the taxpayer protection act will be passed into law by Christmas. I have every confidence that our government is going to pass that legislation.

Mr Brad Clark (Stoney Creek): The Liberals will support it.

Mr Wetlaufer: One of my colleagues—I didn't see which one—said, "The Liberals will support it." I don't believe for a minute that the Liberals will support it, because they will not accept the fact that governments cannot increase taxes without going to the public. They will not accept the fact that you just can't keep pouring taxpayers' money into programs which don't produce anything.

I have to talk about all the things that are happening to health care in my community because I'm very proud of it. We will have a cardiac care centre very soon. Grand River Hospital will be breaking ground for the addition

of a new cancer treatment centre. Of course, we have the ICU-CCU units which were opened about 18 months ago, and with the support of this government, we will have 1,700 more long-term care beds in our region—1,700 badly needed long-term care beds. These advances in equipment, facilities and services are the direct result of this government's commitment to improving the health care system in this province.

I can recall very vividly that in 1995 the Liberals campaigned on spending \$17 billion in health care annually. What are we spending now? We're spending \$18.9 billion and that figure is going to go up by 20%. Not a bad record of achievement, I think.

Mr Gerretsen: When will that by?

Mr Wetlaufer: But the job has just begun. We know that. The member from—it used to be Kingston and the Islands—

Interjection.

Mr Wetlaufer: It's still Kingston and the Islands. I'm glad to hear that. He says, "When will that be by?" That will be by the year 2004. We will have all those accomplishments in five years.

What would have happened under your government? Ha, ha, ha. Zilch. Nada. They would have done nothing if they had been the government. They would have done absolutely nothing if they had been the government.

Mr Gerretsen: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to know, is it unparliamentary for a member to refer to another member and then go, "Ha, ha, ha?" That's what I'd like to know.

The Acting Speaker: I don't think you have a point of order.

Mr Wetlaufer: I would like to comment on some of the things we have heard around here. In the last few days we have heard comments about arrogance. What I saw today in the opposition benches was to me a demonstration of arrogance. We had a number of questions from the opposition directed to our cabinet ministers, and when our cabinet ministers attempted to answer the questions, the heckling was so bad from the opposition benches that the Speaker had to stand and call order because he couldn't hear the answers.

That is arrogance. I'm not talking about good-natured heckling, which we know goes on in this House all the time. The Speaker has said that he will accept good-natured heckling. We all do it. This was vicious and arrogant. It was boorish behaviour. It is unbecoming of any elected parliamentarian.

We do not have two sets of books in our government. My recollection is that there were two sets of books in the previous governments. That is arrogance.

Also, the Liberals keep talking about how they introduced a balanced budget. You know, Mr Speaker, that the Ontario auditor in 1990 and also the NDP finance minister, when they came to power in 1990, said that the Liberals did not have a balanced budget. The Liberals keep talking about this balanced budget that they had. I'm sorry. That is arrogance. I could call it distortion of

the facts, but again, if I did that, the Speaker would throw me out of here. So I can't say that.

But also today the Leader of the Opposition stood in his place and talked about how they exert influence, how backbenchers can exert influence. In case he hasn't noticed, for five years our backbenchers have been exerting influence. The fact that he hasn't noticed, the fact that he has sat over there and paid attention only to what he wanted to do is another form of arrogance.

I also think it's a form of arrogance that this Leader of the Opposition demoted the much-revered member from St Catharines, their former House leader, who has done such a good job for so long. I can't believe he would do that. It is totally, totally—

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The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr John C. Cleary (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): I just want to tell the member that things aren't as rosy all over as he would like to say. I've known some of his speeches. I've heard them lots of times in committee. There are a few things that he's forgetting about. The reason the economy is going reasonably well in parts of Ontario is the low interest rates and the American economy.

I also want to tell him that some of the municipalities aren't as happy as you might think. In our part of Ontario, a municipality bought a parcel of land, and, because they had no money to upgrade the bridge, they couldn't put it back on the market.

I know there are a lot of issues out there, especially in health care, in hospital amalgamations, and things aren't too rosy there.

If he was in our part of Ontario and heard what the people are saying about this government, the ones that have rural schools with the possibility of closure, they're not that happy either. There is also the downloading of ambulance services on to the municipalities. There are a lot of things to iron out there, as the Minister of Agriculture should know, because I've been corresponding with him from time to time.

I do know another big issue is social housing. It will hit the municipalities shortly. There are a lot of things that aren't answered.

The other thing I wanted to say while I'm up here is that some of the correspondence I've been sending to the different ministers, they're not too swift on getting the answers back. I would like to hear the replies, especially in health care and education and the downloading to municipalities. I'm sure those are going to be big issues, not only now but in the future.

The Acting Speaker: Further questions or comments?

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): I want to take this opportunity to congratulate the member for Kitchener Centre. I think his comments were apropos and on the spot.

I often thought to myself, when hearing the speech today by the leader of the Liberal Party, that he is somewhat unfair in his attack on the government with respect to the positions enunciated and put forward in the last

few months since we've been elected to the government. He was attacking, and I think it was an opportunity for him to express an opinion besides the one that he had, that he enunciated clearly in the election campaign.

I, myself, was caught off guard with this attack. I think at this time maybe it would have been better to enunciate the policies that would be put forward by his Liberal caucus in the next four years. Strangely, as Liberals, they were absent. It's disappointing. We could have talked about the balanced budget and taxpayer protection. I noticed Mr McGuinty took great lengths to sign that same taxpayer protection act during the campaign.

We talked about all the procedures and applications we put forward in education and in health care. They were strangely silent when it came to the campaign with respect to the Liberal position. It was difficult to hear this condemnation, but in efforts, I didn't hear anything that came forward that expressed the point of view that represented your position.

If there was one short-sighted nature that the Liberal caucus offered in the campaign, it was the fact that its policies and initiatives weren't enunciated clearly. It seems to be a point in the throne speech that, if you opposed the throne speech, if you felt there was some kind of unreasonable position to be taken, now's the time to express your point of view on the issues and policies facing the people of Ontario today. Once again, it wasn't there, concluding once again about a Liberal that the best debate a Liberal has is when they're alone.

The Acting Speaker: Further questions or comments?

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): I listened with great interest to the comments of the member for Kitchener Centre and the Minister of Labour, and I can say that at least the last speech had some insight in it.

I'm glad to hear a five-minute speech, out of 10, based on a self-admiration society that the member built his own riding. It's great to know that he's such a hero and everybody loves him. It's wonderful. I know the Premier is pleased to hear that the reason the member got re-elected was solely due to his own personal popularity and had nothing to do with Mike Harris and the PC platform, though certainly the Premier will take part of that credit.

He talked about arrogance. I think that word was used about 40 times, and I appreciate the fact that the government has picked up what we have talked about in the last few days in this Legislature.

Arrogance is when you promise not to close hospitals and you shut hospitals down. That's arrogance.

Arrogance is when you come out in a campaign and say, "We're not going to cut funding for special education," and you leave kids stranded in the cold and you leave kids out of the classroom. That's arrogance.

Arrogance is when you say you are going to protect the environment and you turn around and cut half the staff and you get rid of most of the regulations. That's arrogance.

Every single aspect of the commitments you talked about to real Ontarians—the Premier likes to use that, unlike unreal Ontarians or plastic Ontarians who don't fit

your little criteria—you've broken those commitments. You've broken the commitment to health care and you've broken the commitment to education, you've broken the commitment to the environment.

At the same time as you continue to give a tax cut to your richest friends, you still continue to beat up on the most vulnerable people in this province. You continue to push the hot buttons of squeegee kids. You continue to push the hot buttons of welfare recipients. All of those hot focus group buttons that you believe will get you votes, regardless of whom it hurts, you continue to push. That's arrogance.

This is only the beginning. I think we're going to see four years of the most arrogant government in the history of this province on that side of the House.

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): I wanted to add my congratulations to the member for Kitchener Centre on a wonderful exposition of where we stand and what the throne speech was about.

Over the last year, we prepared ourselves for the election that came in early June and we set out the policies that we thought would lead this province on a better trail than it got over the last, lost 10 years of tax, borrow and spend by two different governments.

It's quite refreshing to hear the member for Kitchener Centre lay out the policies and programs for this government over the next three, four or five years and give the people of Ontario the insight they need to see where we're going as a government.

I'm very pleased to be able to get up tonight and congratulate Mr Wetlaufer, the member whose riding adjoins mine. We share some of the same problems, particularly in the areas of health and education.

The Minister of Health has been very active in starting new programs in the city of Stratford, most recently last Friday, and will again a week from Thursday in the town of Listowel open a breast screening treatment centre, the only one this side of Ottawa. We're very pleased that this government shows good leadership in both education and health care.

I wanted to congratulate the member for Kitchener Centre.

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The Acting Speaker: Response?

Mr Wetlaufer: I would like to thank my colleagues the Minister of Labour and the member from Perth-Middlesex, as well as the members of the opposition, Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh, I believe, and Hamilton East for taking part in the debate.

It's a distortion—not intentional, mind you—to say that I'm a hero. I don't claim to be a hero in my riding; I just claim to work hard for the people of my riding, and it's nice to know that they appreciated it.

However, that again may be a sign of arrogance, that they would misinterpret my feelings and what I said. But that doesn't surprise me. We see this arrogant attitude among the opposition constantly.

I look across there. They talked today about the fact that they got 40% support in the last election and how

proud they were of that 40%. They should be proud, Mr Speaker, but think of what they did. They took an issue and they encouraged the populace to vote strategically, thereby almost obliterating a third party. That is arrogance personified. That is an attempt to destroy democracy, if you will. It hurts that they would do this. That is arrogance. It is arrogant opposition.

I would like to point out something—

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): Destroy democracy? How do you destroy democracy? We couldn't destroy democracy if we wanted to.

Mr Wettlaufer: You have done everything you could to destroy it. I love their obsession.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate.

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): I will be splitting this 20-minute segment of my speaking time with my colleague the member for Hamilton Mountain.

I want to recognize that 10 minutes is not a lot of time to do full justice to this speech from the throne that was presented to us last week. Since my colleague from Hamilton Mountain, whom I am absolutely delighted to welcome into this Legislature, will be making her maiden speech, I want to be sure to leave her lots of time. I'm going to move right on to page 3 of the throne speech, where I think the real thrust of the speech begins.

This is where the government sets out its credo: that "government exists to serve people, not the other way around." I have to admit that so far I would be in full agreement with the sentiment. I even appreciate the story of Mrs Rody that follows, because a woman who successfully raises five children on her own is indeed to be admired. But I find the government's reason for praise somewhat disturbing. Mrs Rody is praised because she asked for no assistance from government. How convenient for the government—a government that has just said it is there to serve the people—that it can dedicate itself to those who make no demands on it. How convenient. These are the people the Harris government wants to hear from, the people, according to the throne speech, who have not been heard enough in the past.

Clearly this is not a government that wants to hear from people who actually do need assistance: parents of kids with special needs, for instance, those who were in the House this afternoon; or people like the 105-year-old senior who was evicted from her nursing home with no place to go; or the 81-year-old whose care needs were ignored until he walked into a police station with obvious evidence of physical abuse; or the disabled who need concrete assistance from government if they are going to be able to participate as this government's ideal, hard-working, taxpaying, law-abiding citizens. Just give the disabled a chance to meet your model of a hard-working citizen.

There are actually a lot of people this government doesn't want to hear from. It certainly didn't want to hear from the thousands of parents and teachers who are protesting cutbacks to education, and they still don't want to hear how disastrous a situation people are facing in classrooms with the new curriculum and no textbooks. In

fact, sometimes the teachers don't even have the curriculum, but the kids are going to be tested on it next May nevertheless.

This government doesn't really want to hear from doctors who are leaving their medical practices and our communities because of the stress of working in critically underserviced communities. They certainly don't seem to want to listen to the pleas of foreign-trained doctors who could be working in our communities within a matter of weeks if this government would provide some funding for their Canadian residency training.

They don't want to hear from hospitals that have deficits. They don't want to hear about the waiting lists that are in those hospitals or the bed closures and staff layoffs and even longer waiting lists that will result from this government's intention—a clearly stated intention in the last budget—to take another \$100 million out of hospitals, an intention that was made real just two weeks ago when hospitals with deficits were all sent letters saying: "Get your budgets balanced. Don't come and talk to us about what that's going to mean. Just get your budgets balanced."

The list of people who have tried to talk to this government could be endless. No wonder the government wants to hear from hard-working folks who won't ask it for anything at all.

I'm going to move on quickly to page 4 of the speech. Page 4 is where it talks about the strong economy as a foundation of prosperity. Again, I have no disagreement with this statement, no disagreement when the speech actually says that there is still more to do; my problem is with the definition of what still needs to be done. According to the Harris government, what must be done is to cut more taxes in the name of ever greater competitiveness. There's no sense anywhere in this throne speech that the increased competitiveness has benefited people very unequally in this province, that there is much more to be done to ensure that the benefits of a strong economy are actually felt by Ontario's citizens.

In my home community of Thunder Bay, in 1998, 17,780 people, 14%, were below the poverty line; 28% of our aboriginal population are below the poverty line; 61% of those people living in poverty are women, and the poorest of those women are those who are trying to provide for their children. This government never wants to acknowledge that 50% of those who were affected by the welfare cuts of their last administration were actually children. What's the point, I wonder, of programs, as good as they are, as important as they are, that profess to offer healthy beginnings for newborns and young children if so many of those children will continue their lives living in poverty?

Food bank use is increasing not just in big cities like Toronto but in my home community of Thunder Bay. The Thunder Bay waiting list for affordable housing right now is 1,627 people. The government says: "It's not our responsibility. They're not in the throne speech. That's the responsibility of the municipality now."

Mike Harris likes to brag about the 437,000 fewer people on welfare, even though they have absolutely no idea where these people have actually gone. They certainly haven't gone into failed workfare programs, and it's too late now to have them help pick apples.

We know that some of the people who have left welfare are actually back in school. That's a good thing. It would be an even better thing if they had been helped to get back to school by their own government, because these are the single parents who are trying to get a new start by going to college or university. You'll remember that these are the ones who were kicked off welfare early on. They were told to go and get OSAP: "Go into debt if you want to go back to school and get a new start for you and your family." A lot of the folks who would have liked to go back to college or university didn't get kicked off welfare because they couldn't have survived going into debt on OSAP. It's tough to think about getting into large debts when you're poor, especially if you have children to support at the end of it.

I don't think we should forget the kinds of things this government did in its first mandate. I'm going to run out of time very quickly if I go back too far in remembering not the 10 years before the Harris government took office but the last four that have brought such hardship to so many people in this province.

I'm going to move on to page 5. This is where it says, "All branches of government must treat people fairly and with respect." I thought that sounded suspiciously like something that might approach social justice, a concern for equity even, "fairly and with respect." But then I read on, because what that means is, "To that end, your government will introduce ..." a taxpayers' bill of rights; not a bill of rights for children, not a bill of rights for frail and vulnerable seniors and certainly not a disabled bill of rights, because a commitment to enact for the disabled is now a statement about producing an action plan.

I must leave out much of the rest of the throne speech. I'm going to skip the rest of the pages so I leave my colleague with enough time to say all the things I know she wants to say.

Much of the rest of this throne speech is just about getting tough on people; mandatory drug treatment for people on welfare—forget the evidence that it doesn't work. And don't think about all those with mental illness who are in our jails because there's no place for them to get treatment, or the 50% of children who need mental health services and won't get them.

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The throne speech says there will be zero tolerance of welfare fraud, a crackdown on squeegee kids, our jails will be made more secure, and more boot camps will be built despite the evidence of high recidivism rates. But what about "treating people fairly and with respect"? Clearly, this government only meant that to apply to what it refers to at the end of the throne speech as "real people," where it talks about "making life better for real people." Clearly, what they mean by that is making life better for hard-working families that remain their focus.

The others—the children, the disabled, the poor, the frail seniors, the sick, the aborigines, the immigrants—I guess just aren't real so they can easily be dismissed, unless you believe as we do and as our leader said today, that government should be about improving life for all people. We believe that every citizen in this province is a real person and deserves to be treated with fairness and with respect and to be served by a government that meets the needs and acts for all the citizens of this province.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Hamilton Mountain.

Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain): Mr Speaker, please accept my congratulations on your election to the office of Speaker.

It is a great privilege for me to be part of this Legislative Assembly, even after tonight, and to hold the honourable role as an official opposition member and representative for Hamilton Mountain, as well as Liberal critic for colleges and universities.

I'm very proud to be a Canadian and proud to be a citizen in this great province of Ontario. I'm fortunate to belong to a nation that has welcomed generations of newcomers and offered them the hope and realization of a better life, a nation that has demonstrated leadership in implementing policies and programs that have characterized Canada as a decent, compassionate and caring nation.

My parents came to this province years ago from Greece with a dream for a better life for themselves and for their children. I have never lost sight of their vision: a vision of opportunity, choices, prosperity, peace and harmony; respect for education and for the educated; respect for work and for people who work hard to support their families; compassion and a sense of responsibility for those who are less fortunate than we are. Their vision is an integral part of my belief system, one that guides me every minute of every day.

I have entered the political fold because I am deeply troubled that this same vision of opportunity has been eroded in Ontario, that our children do not have the same educational opportunities and the same excellent health care that I had growing up on Hamilton Mountain, indeed that many more children are living in poverty than years ago.

Violence in our schools and neighbourhoods is a major issue on Hamilton Mountain. As a parent, I find it unacceptable that our neighbourhoods are not safe for our children. I find it unacceptable that 80% of the car thefts on Hamilton Mountain are youth-related and associated with break-and-enter crimes, most of which occur during school hours. Our children will never be safe if our neighbours' children are hungry, neglected and confused.

I saw these children routinely in my work on Hamilton Mountain and across the region, and as a member of the Hamilton-Wentworth Regional Police youth crime committee, I know that if something doesn't happen soon, all of our children's futures will be at risk. As a parent and educator, my instinct is to ensure a safe environment for our children. We have the knowledge and

the means to make the necessary changes. It has been proven that for every \$1 that we spend on crime prevention, we save \$7.

I commend the Hamilton-Wentworth Regional Police department for its proactive and progressive approaches to addressing youth crime locally. By working with the community, including school boards, car theft by children under 16 has decreased significantly. This progressive department supports the need to tackle the roots of crime—poverty, discrimination, family violence and illiteracy—and the need to improve access to programs that assist families in breaking out of disadvantaged cycles.

As a former small business owner on Hamilton Mountain, I'm appalled at the tax increases in the riding. Many of the small business operators in Limeridge Mall saw increases of 500%. We need to provide the confidence that is necessary for the small business entrepreneurial spirit to thrive in our province once again by communicating and consulting before making decisions.

As a faculty member in the medical program at McMaster University and as a former director at St Peter's hospital, I have witnessed the erosion in our health services and the need to effect change in a sensitive and logical manner. What was the common sense in wanting to close the only geriatric hospital in the region when the demographics clearly show we would need it and more in a few short years? The community won that fight and the decision was reversed, but at great expense, a decision that demoralized an amazingly committed staff and needlessly made our senior citizen patients and their families worry and suffer.

As chief psychologist of the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board, I have seen the demoralization of our teachers, the insecurity of our students' parents surrounding the debacle around the school closure issue, the impossible timelines for the preparation and implementation of new curriculum and the inflexible funding formula which punishes senior officials and school boards for being flexible and wanting to meet the needs of their students.

We cannot hurriedly implement programs and policies without proof of their effectiveness just because they are politically expedient. It is completely unethical to ignore what research shows us simply because it does not fit a particular educational or political philosophy. I agree completely with the raising of the standards in the public school system, but we do need to ensure that there are sufficient resources to assist the less able and less fortunate to meet those standards.

My children are to this point fortunate. They were born without disabilities and they have resourceful parents who will do their best to help them meet those standards and to succeed in life. There are, however—and some of them were here earlier—23 disabled children in Hamilton who did not attend school until October 18 this year because of a lack of resources. They did not even have the opportunity to attempt to meet these new standards.

The research is clear: When the gap between the educated and the non-educated grows, so do crime and poverty statistics. This debate is over. We have this knowledge. It is therefore immoral for us to allow this to continue. I strongly request that the Minister of Education put an end to this discrimination. Every child who wishes to be in school should be in school. This is Canada; we're better than this.

It is with honour and gratitude that I accepted the role as opposition critic for the ministry responsible for colleges and universities. Our colleges and universities are facing a lengthy list of challenges over the next decade: an enormous increase in student enrolment of over 40%, the need to hire thousands of new faculty, the need to address millions of dollars in deferred maintenance, critical shortages in student housing and an increased demand for student financial assistance, to name just a few.

These challenges follow a period in which this government has cut hundreds of millions of dollars from post-secondary funding, allowed student debt and tuition fees to soar, moved Ontario to second place in the highest tuition cost and last place in per capita provincial spending on post-secondary education. Simply put, our colleges and universities, to use a familiar phrase, are in "a created crisis."

Let me put a human face to these issues. A few years ago Carissa, a constituent of Hamilton Mountain, entered university with the assistance of a government loan and with the confidence that the loan forgiveness program would reduce her projected debt from \$60,000 to \$53,000. Carissa had other challenges in her life, however. Her parents died just before she entered university and she was left without any inheritance and with a much younger stepbrother. She did not give him up to a foster home and she did not seek social assistance. They remained a family.

She asked for and received a loan. In the middle of her studies she needed to accept a bursary from McMaster University and to work a few extra hours at her part-time job to feed herself and her brother—to feed herself and her brother. Carissa thought she was doing the honourable thing, that is until she found out last spring that she no longer qualified for the loan forgiveness program. With tears, she told me if she had known it would be so difficult, she would never have gone to school; she just should have gone on welfare and given up her brother to a foster home. I have heard this from other students as well who have family responsibilities. Don't these constituents qualify for the government's definition of "real people"?

I would like to make a plea to the Premier to contact this amazing young woman, Carissa, to assure her that she did the honourable thing and that as leader of this province he will direct his minister to accept her application for loan forgiveness.

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It is the right and honourable thing to do. It is not an indication of weakness when a leader can say, "A mis-

take has been made, and I will do the right thing and correct the situation." It is a sign of strength to do so. I ask that the Premier show the truly strong leadership that the young people of this province deserve.

In my role as critic for colleges and universities I sincerely hope that I am in the position to applaud this government when it does the right thing, just as I intend to be a thorn in the side of this government on behalf of all the Carissas who are squealing under the policies that have created the situation described. I believe that all of us together can move in a positive direction to regain the vision of prosperity and peace and, in the process, regain our children's confidence for a better future.

The ancient Greeks defined happiness as pursuing one's goals along the lines of excellence. I wish all of us here today continued happiness and look forward to working for the people of Ontario. It will be an honour.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Southwest): I am pleased to join in the debate tonight to respond to the member for Thunder Bay-Atikokan and the member for Hamilton Mountain and to welcome the member from Hamilton Mountain to the Legislature. I look forward to working with you.

In both speeches that were given tonight, I was listening. We're talking about the throne speech. The throne speech is very similar to the Blueprint. There's a lot of consistency in our party's platform.

When I listened to the Lieutenant Governor deliver the throne speech last Thursday, October 21, there was talk of tax cuts. We've seen what has happened with tax cuts in this province over the last four years. We've seen 99 tax cuts introduced by this government.

Now, 572,000 net new jobs have been created in this province. That's almost 600,000 new jobs. Those are new jobs that aren't happening just in the ridings of members on this side of the House, but in ridings of the members opposite. They too are seeing what's happening in this province, that more people are working, that almost 600,000 more people are working in our province today than in 1995, and that has had a positive impact.

Also, I thought they might have wanted to talk about the throne speech commitment to increasing health care spending in our province by 20% over the next four years. They conveniently neglected that.

The member for Thunder Bay-Atikokan referred to different pages and she skipped various pages of the throne speech. Those were key pages that would have included references to increased health care spending and to the squeegee kid problem we have here in Toronto. They may not view that as a problem from outside of Toronto, but it is definitely a problem here in the 416 area. I would encourage them to look at the entire throne speech and talk more about tax cuts.

Mr Gerretsen: Let me say how pleased I am to be back here again and see so many familiar faces, although I wish we would be on the other side of the House this time around and have many more familiar faces from our own caucus there.

I would just like to congratulate both the senior member for Thunder Bay and one of our new members from Hamilton Mountain. I think they both spoke extremely eloquently about some of the problems that Ontarians are facing on a day-to-day basis. These are certainly the kinds of stories and the kinds of situations that I hear about and have heard about over the last four years.

I think what it all boils down to is this: This government—even though they say they're not the government in the throne speech, which I thought was one of the more laughable sentences in the whole throne speech, because they've been in power for the last four years and are the people who sowed all this chaos throughout the province and this discontent among a whole bunch of people.

What government should really be all about is: It should level the playing field for people. All government isn't bad. That's the image this government would like to reap, that somehow government is a bad influence in our lives. Government can be a very good and positive influence in our lives, particularly in the two main areas that the provincial government is involved in.

I believe that everyone is entitled to health care when they need it and if they need it, regardless of how much money they have in their pocket, and that everyone ought to be entitled to an education to the best of their abilities, again without any economic constraints. That's what government is all about; that's what these two members advanced. Those are the kinds of issues we'll be addressing over the next four years, and we will hold this government accountable for any and all actions.

Mr Frank Mazzilli (London-Fanshawe): Mr Speaker, I'd like to congratulate you on your appointment and congratulate all the members in our caucus and on the opposition benches. As we've heard from the members from Thunder Bay-Atikokan and Hamilton Mountain, certainly some of the stories from that side are stories of desperate people in trouble, but in our riding certainly what I've heard was 10 years of lost hope for everybody.

When Mike Harris came to power, taxes were cut, and as a result of those tax cuts the economy improved: 570,000 new jobs were created, as we've heard. There are many people across the province who are benefiting from those tax cuts. The opposition refuses to acknowledge any of that, and it has occurred in their ridings.

It's because of those tax cuts that we have safe communities. The member for Hamilton Mountain said they have some strategic initiatives. It's our government that, through the strong tax cuts and growing the economy, funded 1,000 new police officers across the province, therefore reducing the crime in her riding. I certainly will take some credit for that. It's because of that, the growing economy, that we have certainly the infrastructure money for our hospitals. The member from Thunder Bay-Atikokan has benefited directly in her riding because of that strong economy.

If we can just concentrate on creating a good economy for everyone in this province, the members across the floor will also benefit from that. I'm just about running out of time, so I'll time it better next time.

Mr Ruprecht: I listened very carefully to the remarks that were made today by the members from Thunder Bay-Atikokan and Hamilton Mountain and one thing is clear: This throne speech relegates most Ontarians to irrelevancy and in fact pushes some to the sidelines so that they belong to the margins.

Let's see what these members have said. They've said that tuition fees—a simple BA or an undergraduate degree now costs the student between \$7,000 and \$12,000. A professional degree sometimes goes up to the \$30,000 range. That may be OK for some of the rich friends of the government, but it cannot be OK for most Ontarians. I made it my business to check out the prices and tuition fees even of some of the private schools, and guess what? For a simple undergraduate person in one of the private schools the cost is \$28,000 for one year. We're not even talking about Upper Canada College; we're talking about the lower-echelon private schools.

In addition to that we want to talk about access to trades and professions. You've made a promise, my friends. Your promise in 1995 was to create a professional access-to-trades and credential assessment service. Have you done that? The answer is no. We have had the promise by Minister of Citizenship after Minister of Citizenship; the promise has not been kept. Where is the credential assessment service the Premier said in 1995 that he would establish? It isn't there.

Ex-psychiatric patients—the list goes on and on. You haven't done it. Stop relegating a lot of Ontarians to the sidelines and to the margins of society.

1930

The Acting Speaker: Response?

Mrs Bountrogianni: As a registered psychologist, I'm very impressed with some of the defence mechanisms across the floor, particularly from the member for Kitchener Centre: very strong projection there. Imagine calling us arrogant when you and your behaviour lately just reek of arrogance.

I would like to clarify something for my fellow new member from London-Fanshawe: The only crime that has decreased on Hamilton Mountain is the crime of car theft under the age of 16 due to a local initiative between school boards and police and has nothing to do with any extra policemen. But if you want to give us 1,000 new police people, we'll take them, Frank.

The Liberal message is a harder message to disseminate when compared to divisive messages. We haven't done a great job in disseminating, but I promise you that will change. In the next four years we'll do a much better job of presenting the Liberal message and exposing the divisive messages from the other two extreme parties.

The Acting Speaker: I just remind the members that you speak through the Speaker to the chamber and that we don't refer to members by their names, their first

names particularly. You refer to the members by their ridings. Further debate?

Mr Stewart: I want to compliment my friend and colleague from Kitchener Centre on what I believe was a very stirring speech. He is a man who is truly committed to his riding and to his constituents, nor does he put people down. To the colleague over there from Hamilton Mountain: I must inform you that I'm not a psychologist. I happen to be a farm boy who represents a rural riding, and I don't put anybody down with my title.

On behalf of my constituents, the city of Peterborough and area, I am very privileged and very honoured to take part in this debate on the throne speech and I will talk about the throne speech, which is a bit unique in this House. It's a great opportunity for me to talk about the goals of that speech that will affect the people of Peterborough and the people of this great province.

This throne speech had a very positive ring to it, positive because once again Ontario has a definite course of action to begin the new millennium. Our course of action, as laid out in the throne speech, will create more jobs, it will help people get off the dependency on social services, and it will create a strong and positive effect and a competitive economy. Services, including health care, children's services and education, will not be compromised.

If we are to continue to have a bright future, if we are to have a growing, strong and prosperous province, then we must have a plan. This government presented a plan to the people of Ontario some four and a half years ago. It was called the Common Sense Revolution. The people accepted that plan and the government followed through: It kept its promises—unique, I believe, in political circles these days and unique in political circles for the last number of years.

Once again this spring we asked the people to look closely at the extension or the second leg of our plan, and that was called the Blueprint. From every corner of my riding of Peterborough, throughout the townships of Ennismore, Smith, North Monaghan, Douro, Dummer, Bellmont and Methuen, Otonabee, Asphodel and South Monaghan, to the villages of Lakefield, Norwood and Havelock, to include Curve Lake and Hiawatha First Nation, and finally the city of Peterborough, the Blueprint message was heard.

People in my riding in the tourist industry, in the agriculture community, in small business and industry and in communities throughout our area, heard, listened and accepted. They supported me, they supported the plan, and they gave me the right to represent them in a government dedicated to major change, change this province requires if we and our children are going to continue to grow and prosper. Some of the things that are happening—and that is the kinds of jobs, hope, growth and opportunities—are necessary to build a rewarding and successful life in this province. The Blueprint plan was accepted, and our course for the next four years was defined. It was approved by this province, something that the opposition should remember. The plan was approved

by this province, because that's why we are the government. Confidence and optimism were very clear in my riding, as they have been all over this province.

I would like to publicly thank the residents of Peterborough for bestowing upon me the honour of being their representative in this Ontario government for the second term. It is a position I have educated myself for, and I thank the citizens of the great riding of Peterborough for their continued support.

I would like to congratulate all members for their electoral success on June 3. I'm particularly happy to be joined by old colleagues as well as seven new colleagues. I also want to congratulate members of the cabinet and wish them well in their future endeavours. I look forward to working with all members of this House during the coming years towards the common goal of making Ontario a better and more prosperous place in which to live.

In business, you must have a business plan if you're going to survive and succeed. Government is no different: You can have all the plans in the world, but if you don't follow through with them, of course they will not work nor will the business succeed. The old adage or the old statement of planning your work and working your plan rings loud and clear in this throne speech. There's a lot of hard work ahead. Management of the plan is primary, and yes, there will be some tough decisions to be made if we are to continue to fix government. To assist companies, the Ontario government information centres have been set up across this province. They are supplying one-stop access to information and services. What used to take hours to do can now be done in a matter of minutes.

Over the years Peterborough saw many businesses close due to high tax rates, government red tape and onerous labour legislation. Our government has changed that picture. Now I attend many new business openings and expansions in my riding. Four weeks ago, on a single day, I cut the ribbon on three new businesses. That's the type of confidence that this government in the last four years has given the people of this province. Their confidence is showing. People are showing their confidence in all areas, in all parts of this province. They know that the economy is increasing and improving and they are investing once again in our province. I compliment all businesses who have done that in the last four years, and there have been many.

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Our government is extremely concerned to make sure that every person in Ontario has access to top quality health care. A common problem in the riding of Peterborough and in towns and villages across Ontario is the physician shortage. This throne speech addresses this problem by offering free tuition to students who enter medical school if they agree to locate and practise in underserviced areas for five years after graduation.

One of these problem areas is in my riding. The township of Havelock-Bellmont-Methuen is having much the same problem. This area has been designated as an

underserviced area and it stands to benefit from this program. The people in that part of my riding will benefit from this program. There are many such similar areas in the Peterborough riding. I'm certain all of us in this House can identify with this ever-so-common problem in ridings throughout this province.

Governments don't create jobs; businesses create jobs. If we are to create new jobs—and I'm talking about jobs in construction, jobs in the agri-food industry, jobs in high technology, jobs in large and small industry and jobs in all the professional areas—then we must continue to create the atmosphere for new foreign and domestic investment.

The atmosphere I'm talking about is created by tax reductions, investment in research and development, partnerships within all sectors, and above all, to promote that consumer confidence I talked about, but also confidence in ourselves. A strong economy through tax reduction equals more new jobs, which equals an increase in revenues, which will allow our government to increase and maintain services for Ontarians.

When I talk about the throne speech addressing the future, let me draw you to a few of the ideas.

Number one in my mind is the SuperBuild Growth Fund. This is a \$20-billion public-private sector partnership that will stimulate our economy as no other fund has done in the last many, many years.

Actually, the past government, prior to our election in 1995, forgot altogether that our infrastructure had to be maintained. They forgot it completely. All you had to do was drive up the 401 or any of the roads in this province 10 years ago, even five or six years ago, and they were filled with nothing but holes. Somebody seemed to think that the infrastructure would go on forever. It won't.

In today's society we must work together. We have to form those public and private sector partnerships with 100% cooperation if we are to renew our network of hospitals, colleges, universities, transit roads and bridges, to name a few. Ladies and gentlemen, standing alone is no longer affordable.

Our record in the area of highway upgrades, as well as funding of municipal roads, is evidence of our commitment to infrastructure programs. You will hear the municipalities in this province talk about the lack of dollars they have received. I suggest to you that most municipalities are paving and fixing roads like they have never done before. In fact, some of them are coming out saying, "Where do we spend the money now?"—money they've saved because of fewer people on social services, money they've saved because of the holiday on OMERS, money they have saved in many other ways. They are completely, I swear, paving their entire municipalities.

We have to be preparing today, I believe, to meet tomorrow's needs. We must be committed to infrastructure programs, and this throne speech says just that.

Research and development is primary if Ontario is to continue to be one of the big players in this world. Here again, if we are to fund these programs and services to

the extent necessary to be a world leader, we must find new and innovative ways.

A good example of this is right in my riding of Peterborough. Trent University has benefited extremely well financially in the last few months. Trent has supplied the professional expertise, professors like Dr Jim Parker and Dr Holger Hintelmann—these individuals are world-class researchers—and private sector companies like Multi Health Services and Ontario Power Generation, in partnership with the provincial government, have supplied the funding. These awards are intended to keep our best and brightest young researchers here in Ontario. Here again the throne speech emphasizes that this is needed and it is very innovative.

Whether it is Trent University in Peterborough or Sir Sandford Fleming College—which, by the way, are in the process of establishing a long-term-care facility in partnership with two other long-term-care facilities in the community. They're also going to introduce a program to educate and train students in long-term care. As well, the residents of Peterborough raised \$2-million-plus for a heart catheter lab at the Peterborough regional hospital.

I want to publicly congratulate Dave Smith and Linda Whetung, the two co-chairs who started this campaign, as well as Dr Bill Hughes, with the support of the community. I remember in the paper a picture of a group of young children who had collected pennies and nickels and dimes and presented them to Dave and Linda as part of that fundraising program. The city, the county and the entire riding, as well as others, got behind this project—again cooperation, partnerships, to move this province ahead. In the particular case I mentioned with the cath lab, government is funding the operation, so they are very much a part of this relationship as well.

The agri-food industry is an extremely important part of the fabric of this province. It represents an area that I believe in the past has been somewhat forgotten. Here again the throne speech emphasizes how critical agriculture is to the province's economy. Annually, \$25 billion is contributed and, more importantly, it employs some 640,000 Ontario men and women. Our government has supported and will continue to support our farms and our farm families.

Again, through research funding, a highly respected agricultural college, inspection programs and water quality programs, our agri-food community will contribute to an Ontario that is ready to meet the future. It is another example of partnerships that must make sure everybody is treated fairly throughout the province. Our agri-food industry will be treated fairly by our government. This is not happening at the federal level.

Interjections.

Mr Stewart: Ontario farmers are getting the short end of the stick. You know it and you don't do anything about it as far as talking to your federal colleagues—again passing the buck.

High taxes, improperly managed revenues, runaway deficits and debt, and budgets not balanced on a yearly basis have to be things of the past. There's only one tax-

payer, and he or she must be treated fairly, respectfully and honestly. They must have a say in how we manage this government, their government. Their approval or disapproval must be on an ongoing basis. The throne speech addressed this very critical issue.

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The government will, as promised, introduce a taxpayer protection and a balanced budget act. No longer will government decide on a whim to increase taxes or spread revenues with little or no concern about the impact it might have on Ontarians. The budget, as this government promised, will be balanced in the year 2000-01, and the proposed balanced budget act will make sure it stays balanced. I believe these two bills are self-explanatory. They are very much the same as Sweden's TEL, or taxes/expenditures limitations, legislation. How novel to do that. We must treat Ontarians fairly and with the utmost respect, but I can assure you that respect must also be earned.

Governments in the past in this province and throughout this country have campaigned on one set of promises and, once elected, have implemented something totally different. Mike Harris has proven that he keeps his promises. The hard work of fixing government and making lasting change continues.

I, along with other members, applaud the Premier for maintaining his commitment to the people of Ontario, who are looking for a government with the courage to bring about real change and to continue that change.

Ontario is poised to meet the challenges of the future. This throne speech does just that. It focuses on making life better in this province.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments.

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): To the member for Peterborough, I find interesting the selective nature with which he discusses the promises and how promises are kept. My constituency office has had literally hundreds of people come there. I'm suggesting to you that the promises of better health and better education are not the case, along with a number of other services. Maybe in the eyes of this government these aren't real people, and maybe it's only real people who are going to have promises kept.

I wonder as well when we talk about hospital care and quality health care and then we look at the tremendous deficits that are carried by hospitals. We talk about the fact that these hospitals have to balance their budgets, yet how do they balance a budget when hospitals are not in the business of turning a profit? Therefore, hospitals have no alternative but to continue cutting their services.

The other issue I find interesting is that we talk about the economy, an economy that has a lot of growth, and this growth of course is all due to tax cuts, according to the honourable member. Instead, tax cutting before you balance a budget is like playing Russian roulette with sustaining the well-being of economic growth. We all know that. Economists all know that. An economic boom normally translates into the well-being of all of the citizens of this province. Unfortunately, we don't have

better services in this province when it comes to health care, education and the environment, so that economic boom isn't translating into the well-being of the citizens.

Government has a role. It has to be run in a business-like way, but it is not a business and it should not be a business. A government is in place to meet the needs of the people.

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Brampton): I'd just like to congratulate the member for Peterborough on his re-election. He's one of the hardest-working MPPs we have in this House.

The goals of the throne speech that I want to address and that were set out by my friend are certainly the tax cuts. Tax cuts have proven they're the boon of this economy. We have seen tremendous job growth. The member for Peterborough talks about Peterborough in terms of job growth. I would relate it to the growth that has happened also in Barrie, Innisfil and Bradford, a tremendous growth in business, and it's because of the tax cuts and because of the policies of this government that has been created.

You also look for a strong economy in terms of being able to provide the health care services, the education and the social programs. You need a strong economy to be able to provide those services, and the Blueprint that's set out with respect to our throne speech is right on track.

What we have here is tremendous investment for my riding, for example, in school construction. We have in excess of 20 schools being constructed at this point in time. We also have a tremendous growth in health care, a brand new hospital, Royal Victoria Hospital, a tremendous addition to the York County Hospital. We also have additional investments in our riding in kidney dialysis.

Just the other day I was at an opening of a new nursing home with long-term care beds, Woods Park Care Centre, with the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, one of the first homes that have been built with respect to provincial standards. It's a tremendous building and is designed to help our seniors in terms of the health care needs they have.

The investments that we're making with respect to the result of our strong economy bode well. I would say the throne speech approach that we're taking here, not only with the SuperBuild Growth Fund, is going to have a tremendous impact on our infrastructure. We need that because the federal government has done nothing in that area and they have no plan.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): Thank you, Mr Speaker, and congratulations. It's nice to see you in the chair.

I wanted to comment on the speech of my colleague from Peterborough. He mentioned accountability, of course, in his speech tonight, but he forgot to talk about the accountability of cabinet ministers and he forgot to talk about the four weeks that Mr Gilchrist remained in cabinet while under police investigation. That is not accountability; that is arrogance.

This government talks a good game about protecting taxpayers. This government talks about protecting tax-

payers, but let's look and see what they've done since the election on June 3. Since the election, they've increased the size of cabinet by 25%. This is the gang that was going to protect us. This is the gang that's going to manage our finances more effectively—25%.

And look at this: We've got twice as many whiz kids as we used to have. They doubled the size of the Premier's office. Did they announce that in a flurry of rhetorical eloquence here in the Legislature? Oh, no. That was all slipped in.

Mrs McLeod: And all that advertising.

Mr Duncan: Advertising comes in handy too in these things.

What did they do? What else did these great defenders of taxpayers do? They increased their political staff's salaries by 30%. Did they do that with a big announcement out in the aisle? No, no, no. They slipped it in by way of regulation some time in midsummer.

This is the government of working people and of democracy, yet this House has sat only seven days this year. That's not democracy. That's not accountability. That's outright arrogance. You won't face the House. You won't face the people.

Nurses—they talk about hiring nurses. We have the fewest per capita anywhere. This isn't a government of accountability. It's a government of arrogance.

2000

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): First of all, let me congratulate our member from Hamilton Mountain. She spoke very well, even though the content was a little bit unsure, but she spoke well.

On the speech from the member from Peterborough, over the summer I had an opportunity to talk to many, many MLAs from different countries who visited here. One of the things, as I was explaining to them, was that the membership size in the House has been reduced from 130 to 103. They just could not believe it. They said: "What good fiscal management. Everywhere else in the world, the government size increases. How could you do that?"

I laid it down to my colleagues and my government and to Premier Mike Harris, who have set this great progress and the agenda in which we are on the right track.

Most of us, as the member for Hamilton Mountain mentioned, were all immigrants at some point in time. Most of us come here for the betterment of our families, future hopes for the kids and the education.

About 10 years ago, many people came to me and said: "Rami, are we doing the right thing? Are we in the right place?" They had lost hope and they had lost total opportunity. Since 1995 when we were elected, under the leadership of Premier Harris we have changed the course. The lost hope, we have brought it back to hope and prosperity. I'm very happy to be part of that government, and I intend to work very hard, as the member from Peterborough is doing and all of this caucus is doing.

Mr Stewart: I want to thank my two colleagues, first my old compatriot from Barrie-Simcoe-Brampton and

new compatriot from Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale. Both of these gentlemen are businesspeople who know that the economy has been turned around and that we have to continue to do more.

I have to kind of chuckle to myself about the Liberals. The Liberals have a new word. It appears that you must have gone to school over the last six or eight months. For the last four years, every other word was "draconian." I can't even pronounce it, and I should be able to, because I heard it so darn much. This year, it's "arrogance." When I listen to the comments and the attitude over there, you should look it up and find out what the word "arrogance" means and do it while looking in the mirror.

I hear today of the member from Windsor-St Clair, who is suggesting that everything should be status quo. I don't know whether he has ever been in business or not, but I have. When I wanted to improve my business or expand my business, I hired staff. It seemed to worked fairly well, because that business grew and it became more and more profitable. I do not believe in the status quo. I never have. Unfortunately, that's probably why we are the government and you are the opposition.

I've made the comment that Ontario is poised to meet some great challenges in the future. Let me say that those challenges will be tough. We have to prepare to act and we have to prepare to react. I believe that if we focus on the things that we have talked about in the throne speech, we'll have a great Ontario.

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): I'm pleased to join the throne speech debate tonight and to tell you in advance I'll be splitting this time with the member for Kingston and the Islands.

I want to say at the outset that it's a pleasure for me to join the members of the 37th assembly and to thank the voters of Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke for their renewed vote of confidence in me on June 3. We had a good campaign in the Ottawa Valley, and I was honoured, as always, to have very good opponents. Many in this House will remember Leo Jordan, the former Progressive Conservative member from Lanark-Renfrew. Leo was a redoubtable opponent for the now and the then government. He and Gerry Boyer of the NDP, and Thane Heins, the independent, were very good and vigorous opponents. We had a vigorous and positive ventilation of the issues in the 28-day campaign, and there is no question that for the people of my part of eastern Ontario, the main issues in the campaign were health care, education and highways, and in particular, Highway 17. I was glad to hear the previous speaker, Mr Stewart from Peterborough, address his views on highway policy.

I just simply want to make the point that there is no more important transportation priority for the nearly 100,000 people whom I represent in Renfrew county and in the district of Nipissing than the improvement of Highway 17 through the upper Ottawa Valley. I must say that one of the most memorable days of my public life will be that day—I think it was June 1—when we were gathered together in the driving rain in Arnprior, in the best tradition of Maurice Duplessis, to await the arrival of the

minister of highways, who was inbound from Brampton or wherever, to tell us with all of the wonderful pre-election-day code what would happen if certain things happened on June 3. I must say the now Minister of the Environment, the then Minister of Transportation, under the circumstances played the game as best he could. I want to say, quite frankly I don't know who was responsible for that. I think I know from eight campaigns the pressures of pre-election-day politics, but I don't think I will ever experience quite the humiliation that I felt for the entire political class as we were gathered in the pouring rain at the junction of 17 and old Highway 29, just south of the town of Arnprior. Those people who drove by us that day must have wondered what kind of Martian personalities were there for what kind of purpose.

But I can tell you what the people of Renfrew, Lanark and Carleton counties heard that day. They heard a commitment from all of us that we were going to be as good and as true as our word and that we were going to, on a priority basis, accelerate the four-laning of Highway 17 westward from its current terminus down near Antrim and that we were going to make other improvements to that very important provincial highway in eastern Ontario.

I stand here tonight on behalf of Liberal, Conservative, New Democratic and independent voters in my county and in my district and I say to Her Majesty's provincial government that the people expect that those solemn promises made by all of us, including the now Minister of the Environment, about the improvements to that highway are going to be made, they're going to be made on a timely and a priority basis, and we are not going to be hearing evasive answers about why and how it can't be done.

I want to say to the member from Peterborough that I certainly understand the work that's being done on highways, and I think we're all pleased. I note again that this year in gasoline tax revenues alone we will take in over \$2.1 billion, and according to the latest data from the Ministry of Finance we will spend not more than 40% of that on highway improvements. Now, I appreciate the work that's being done, but I say again that the motoring public, particularly people—

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): Talk about the federal gas tax and how much we get back from that.

Mr Conway: If Mr Runciman wants to go to Ottawa to make the claim against the dominion government he's free to do so. He ran, like the rest of us, for this place. I make the point that we will levy and collect \$2.1 billion worth of gasoline tax revenues this year, and that money was intended to go to highway improvement. We are spending, according to the Canadian Automobile Association, not more than 40 cents of that dollar collected for the purpose intended.

I say for myself in this talk about tax cuts, as someone who lives in rural Ontario, if the provincial governments of whatever stripe don't want to spend the gas tax

revenues for the purpose intended, that's one tax I want cut back. If you're only going to spend \$700 million or \$800 million or \$900 million on highway improvements, then don't be taxing the people, particularly of rural and northern Ontario, through their gasoline taxes for general government programs.

I repeat: It is an unfair burden on rural and northern people that they should be paying through gasoline taxes for general government programs.

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey): What did you do with the money when you were in for three short years?

Mr Conway: Spend the money, I say to the very vociferous member from Shallow Lake or wherever in Grey county, that you're collecting—

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Order, member from Owen Sound-Grey.

Interjection.

Mr Conway: I want my time.

The Acting Speaker: Yes. Stop the clock.

2010

Mr Conway: It is suggested about monies. Well, I have been reading the annual report of the Ministry of Finance. We have a government that is drunk with money: \$3 billion extra again last year over the budgetary expectation, and I might note, expenditures up \$1.3 billion in the pre-election year.

Mr Murdoch: Health care.

Mr Conway: Oh, he says "Health care." Let me say that for the second or third year this government has taken in billions of dollars beyond the budget plan. I note that last year, according to the document just—

Mr Murdoch: Did you spend any money or not tell us about it?

Mr Conway: I am not going to talk over that, Mr Speaker.

Interjection.

Mr Conway: Well, I was here earlier when most members weren't. We got quite a little lecture from the Minister of Labour and the Premier about parliamentary protocol. I was impressed. For those of you who weren't here, you might want to read the Hansard. I'm simply making the point, because "decorum" appears to be the buzzword. Well, I will be as decorous as my friend from Grey, perhaps a bit better.

The point I want to make is that in the Ministry of Finance annual report we are told that last year, fiscal 1998-99, revenues over \$3 billion above the plan, spending \$1.3 billion above the plan. So don't talk to me about who's got how much money. It is a very happy time, and you won the election. I applaud you for that. You won it fair and square. I'm a democrat and I want to say that I've won elections and I've lost elections. June 3, the verdict was clear.

But the people of Renfrew heard some promises around highway improvement, and I'm going to be here for the next four years to remind the treasury bench of those promises.

Hon Mr Runciman: Where's Leo?

Mr Conway: My good friend from Montague has been summoned to the Elysian Fields of post-political retirement, and he is going to graze on that happy grass with a couple of my good Liberal friends. I see a lot of expectant faces across the way, wondering, "Will the phone ring for me should that day ever occur?"

A couple of other things—health care. I'm glad the Minister of Health is here tonight, a person for whom I have a very high regard, but the health care issues in the Ottawa Valley remain the number one priority. This government ordered the closure of the Pembroke Civic Hospital three years ago. At that time the experts told us that we could do all the renovations at the remaining hospital for \$5 million. Politicians weren't going to be allowed those decisions. That was going to be made by the commission under the authority of the provincial government. The cost was estimated at \$5 million. Do you know what that cost is today, three years later? It's \$24 million. I have some very real sympathy for my constituents who are awaiting those renovations, because they are going to be absolutely central to the delivery of improved health care. I've got some real sympathy for the Minister of Health, because if it's happening in Pembroke, where we had a hospital close, I ask myself, what's happening in Sarnia, in Toronto, in Hamilton, in Thunder Bay, in Sudbury? But let me repeat, that hospital was closed in Pembroke three years ago on the analysis that said all the renovations could be done at the remaining hospital for \$5 million. Three years later, that \$5 million is now estimated to be \$24 million, and we don't have a shovel in the ground.

Health care, whether it's improved hospital services, the need for rural doctors—we've got communities like Cobden that are desperately seeking ways of replacing their long-time general practitioner, who has retired.

These issues and collateral issues like education, the fact that I have the largest county and a public school board in it—if you can believe, Renfrew county, 3,000 square miles, and I've got a public school board that does not qualify for the rural and remote grant formula under the new funding formula, while North Bay and Parry Sound and Hastings and Haliburton-Victoria do?

The people of Renfrew, the public school supporters of Renfrew, rightly expect that that formula is going to be amended and the largest county is going to be made eligible for the rural and remote funding formula. With that, I turn to my colleague from Kingston.

Mr Gerretsen: It's always a pleasure to follow the member from Renfrew North because you can be sure that every member in the House is awake and listening attentively to everything that he has to say.

Let me start off by also thanking the people of my riding for re-electing me on June 3. The people of Kingston and the Islands have always been good to me over the years and I will certainly try to continue to represent them in the best way I know how.

When you listen to a throne speech, you always try to find something positive in that speech that in effect will unite people together. I think it is very important for a

government, regardless of its political stripe, after an election to try to bring people together and to govern and to speak to people collectively across this province. I think that's the one area where this throne speech has utterly failed.

The one area that I would like to address myself to is the last couple of lines in the second-last paragraph in which the throne speech says that they will continue the revolution but they "do not view themselves as 'government,'" that they "came to fix government." I find that very difficult to understand, because I can tell you, you ask the people who have been hurt by this government over the last four years in one way or another whether or not they regard the Conservative Party that's been in power for the last four years as government.

Tell that to the social service recipients who lost 20% of their transfer payments early on, back in 1995. Tell that to the disabled community who expected this government, after the Premier gave a promise in 1995, to come up with a meaningful Ontarians with Disabilities Act. Ask them if they have in effect received that kind of treatment in the act that was passed earlier this year, because the answer will be a resounding no.

Tell that to every hospital board and every hospital administrator or anyone who has had anything to do with a hospital over the last three or four years, with longer waiting lists, with deficits. I think just about every hospital in this province currently runs at a deficit situation. Ask them who the government has been over the last four years and they will quickly tell you that.

Tell that to the university and college students whose tuition fees have gone up by more than 40% over the last four years. Ask them if they know which party has been the government over the last four years or who the government is.

Tell that to the municipal taxpayers who in many cases, even as late as this year, right now, are still getting tax bills that deal with the taxation year 1998: corrections, amendments that have been issued because of the seven different property tax bills they brought forward last year and the year before, and they bungled it every time. Ask them who the government is and they will tell you who that is.

The one area that I always find interesting is that this group of people like to think of themselves as being the business party, the party in power that is going to look after the affairs of the province of Ontario in a business-like fashion. That's the way they pride themselves. They talk about the strength of the economy, and the economy is better off than it was five years ago; I'll grant you that. But there's much more to it than that.

Can you imagine how a fiscally responsible government, as they like to see themselves, could possibly justify to themselves the fact that there's been an extra \$23 billion added on to the public debt? When they took over, this province was in debt in the neighbourhood of \$90 billion. Currently, according to their own figures, it stands at \$114 billion. One of the interesting features that I find about all of that is the fact that with all of the

complaining, the whining that they do about the cost of social services in this province, we spend more in this province on an annual basis on interest on the public debt, in interest payments, than we do on all the social services that the province provides. We spend \$9.1 billion annually on interest on the public debt and \$7.9 billion on all the social services.

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The other thing that's very interesting is, if they were really that interested in a balanced budget, why didn't they balance it this past year or even the year before? If they had waited with their tax cuts until we had a balanced budget, number one, we wouldn't be in debt as we are today—we'd probably be about \$10 billion less in debt than we are today, and in effect we wouldn't have that extra debt to carry with us—but we in effect would also have more money available either for tax cuts or to put in the public debt, to pay down in tax cuts, public debt, or into the many services that we require.

Tell that to the people who are interested in the environment in our province. I think one of the greatest indictments against this government is that, according to the various reports that have come out, we are the jurisdiction that is the second-worst polluter in all of North America. I think we're second to Texas or someplace down south in the United States. That, to my way of thinking, is totally unacceptable.

What have they in effect done? They have fired many of the people who used to work in environmental protection. They're basically relying on self-regulation, and in the meantime the environmental standards of this province have deteriorated to a point where we in this province are the second-worst polluter. That is nothing to be proud of.

I believe this government has failed. It failed in the previous four years. Yes, you have the solid support out there of the same 45% of the people who probably voted for you in 1995. But just remember, once you're in government, you are meant to govern for all the people of Ontario. It is a well-known fact among many communities in our society that you have just basically forgotten and have dropped off the bottom third on the economic scale of things. You simply don't care about their problems. If anything, you like to blame them for the problems they encounter on a day-to-day basis.

I maintain that government can be a good force in people's lives. It can be that great equalizer to give people opportunity when it comes to the educational opportunities they require to reach their maximum potential and also give people much-needed health care that doesn't depend on how much money you have in your pocket, but health care that you need and that you want and that is available for you if you need it and when you need it.

Those are the kinds of issues we will be talking about in the next four years.

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): I want to tonight offer congratulations to the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke—a little longer name than the last

time he was here—and the member for Kingston and the Islands. They made some very astute and real observations re the speech from the throne of this government and connected that to some of the promises made during the election and some of the things they had done in the last four years.

Mr Murdoch: Be nice, Tony.

Mr Martin: I'm trying to be nice, Bill. If you'd just slow down here, I might.

There probably aren't two people in this House more qualified to speak about the promises that were made to their particular—

Interjection.

Mr Martin: Is Bill going to take up my time as well as his own?

Interjection.

Mr Martin: "Get used to it," yes.

There probably aren't two people in this House more qualified to speak on how this government and its programs have impacted on the people they represent than the two members who just spoke: the member from Renfrew because of the time that he spent here, and the member for Kingston and the Islands because of the time that he spent as a municipal politician before he came here. They know quite well the promises that were made by this government and some of the money that was doled out before and during the election to make sure the municipalities they represented did not feel the pinch of the reality that's coming at them, what's going to come now. If you look at the program this government has in place and you look at the potential they have to be able to take care of some of the problems that have been created and some of the promises they made, there really is no money.

Yes, the economy has been good for a while and it did generate some revenue, but the government on the other side, the government of Ontario, has given that money away. People will come to realize that in spades over the next couple of months.

Mr Clark: The first two days in the House have been very enlightening for me, to say the very least. I was asked what exactly was happening in the House in the last couple of days and, Mr Speaker, I have to tell you, I described it as being a great debate: It was fact versus fiction; it was rhetoric versus reality.

I think it's very important that everyone know we won the election because of eight very special words: "We did what we said we would do." Those were the eight words that gave us the election. Those were the eight words that gave us the vote of confidence from the people of Ontario.

Our pundits have criticized the throne speech for being nothing new. They said there was nothing new in the throne speech. The reality is we did what the people expected us to do, we did what we said we would do, and God forbid, we actually put in our throne speech our campaign platform. What an incredible revelation, putting your campaign platform into your throne speech. There's nothing new; we know that. We presented to the

people of Ontario what we were going to do, and we're going to do it.

The member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke spoke about decorum. I have to say, Mr Speaker, I have been amazed at what transpired here today. Minister Ecker spoke very clearly about special education and was answering a question, and she was drowned out with ridicule and shouts. Afterwards I met with the parents who came down here to meet with us and they said they couldn't even hear the minister's answer. All they heard was shouting and ridicule. That's not what those people came down here for. They wanted to hear from the minister. They wanted to hear what we were going to do for them and our commitment to those children in special education.

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): I want to add to what the member from Stoney Creek just said. He quoted eight words that the Premier and others had mentioned, and said they kept those words. I can tell you eight words that were said and they didn't keep this promise. The Premier said, "It is not my plan to close hospitals," and he closed hospitals. So much for, "Words that we say—we keep the promises."

I do want to say that my colleagues from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke and Kingston and the Islands raised some very important issues, as they always do.

On the one about highways, I can appreciate what the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke said because the member for Peterborough in his comments said we don't have to worry about potholes on highways in Ontario any more. No, we don't, because there's such a gridlock out there that the traffic isn't moving and highway potholes don't do the damage they used to do. We've got to get rid of the gridlock in this province.

Interjections.

Mr Crozier: All right. What you're saying is that there's no gridlock. OK, we'll move to safety on highways. We'll come down to my riding, which is partly between the cities of London and Windsor and runs through Essex county, and we'll talk about safety on highways then. There isn't a stretch of highway in Ontario that has a worse death rate than that. Do you know what your Minister of Transportation said? Your Minister of Transportation came down and said it was a pleasant ride. I'd like him to ride back and forth with me week after week and see how pleasant it is. Frankly, it's scary.

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The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I was very pleased to hear the speeches made these people. It's unfortunate there's such a short period of time in which they can make so many points. I was also interested in some of the responses to them. The member for Stoney Creek—I believe that is the riding—I was wondering whether he was speaking about when he was at the Liberal nomination supporting his later opponent, Mr Phillips, when he was talking about these same things, whether he was saying those things then or was it after

opportunity knocked and he decided that he might run for the Progressive Conservative Party?

The word "opportunist" comes to mind, but I'm not the kind of person who's going to use the word "opportunist" to describe a person who goes to the Liberal nomination meeting, supports a person for the nomination, then turns around and runs against the person they run. I wouldn't call that opportunism; there may be others in the House on the government benches who might do so.

I'm surprised that the members—they just didn't have the time—did not mention Dr Beiko in St Catharines, who is concerned about ophthalmologists in St Catharines, because now we have eye patients who are not going to be able to see an ophthalmologist because they have fiddled around with the boundaries for ophthalmologists as it relates to the cap which is placed on their billings. As a result, people with glaucoma, people with diabetes, people with other eye afflictions are not going to be able to see an ophthalmologist unless they're prepared to travel many miles down the highway to another centre. At the same time, when they go to the other centre they're going to be taking a space from a person from that centre. I hope this government does not continue to fiddle around with the formula to such an extent that senior citizens and others in a vulnerable position are not adversely impacted. I know my fellow colleagues were concerned about that.

Mr Gerretsen: I'd like to thank the members from St Catharines, Stoney Creek, Sault Ste Marie and Essex, who commented on the speeches of the member from Renfrew and myself.

You know, this highway issue is a very interesting one. Most of the rural politicians that I speak to are very, very concerned with all the roads that have been downloaded particularly to the smaller, rural municipalities. Even if those roads, or many of them, are in a good state of repair right now and even if those municipalities have the financial wherewithal to look after the maintenance of those roads, the question that I have and that they have is, "What is going to happen five or 10 years down the road when many of these roads need to be rebuilt?" It's a foregone conclusion that particularly the smaller municipalities simply will not have the financial ability to reconstruct these roads.

It's interesting that this government seems to take issue with the many different grants and subsidy programs that are around and they've slashed many of them, but what we tend to forget is that many of these programs were started during periods of time when local municipalities simply did not have the financial ability to do a lot of things, such as building roads. What this government has really done is downloaded its responsibility for roads to municipalities. Some of them may be in a good state of repair, but I'll tell you, the chicken are coming home to roost. Maybe three or four or five years down the road when you're no longer in government, another more enlightened government, and hopefully Liberal government, will try to solve those and many of the other

social problems that are being created by this government on a day-to-day basis.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Martin: Speaker, I want to thank you for the opportunity to speak this evening. I, like so many others who have gotten on their feet here tonight, want to first of all thank the people of Sault Ste Marie for their continued faith in the job that I try to do. I won't for a second suggest that the reason the people of the Soo voted for me was because of a lot of the work and effort that I put in. In Sault Ste Marie, the biggest issue in the election, above all else, was how to get rid of Mike Harris.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order, order. I'm having great difficulty hearing the member from Sault Ste Marie. I would very much appreciate if the member for Sault Ste Marie was the only one to be speaking during this next short while.

Mr Martin: I was wondering if maybe the member from Bruce was going to come across the floor and join us over here, if he would do that.

Mr Murdoch: Would you split your time with me?

Mr Martin: Yes, I would. Sure. Come on over, Bill. We'd love to have you.

Anyway, as I was saying before I was so rudely interrupted, in Sault Ste Marie, in the election of 1999, it seemed the biggest issue on the minds of everybody was Mike Harris and his program and the impact that program had on the people who call Sault Ste Marie home.

The reason they voted for me was primarily because they didn't want to vote for anybody who might give Mike Harris another seat in this province, particularly in northern Ontario.

I'm glad to be back here on behalf of the people of my city, to put forth their issues, to speak on their behalf and to challenge the very destructive program this government began some four-plus years ago. Obviously they are going to continue down that road over the next four years, and that's troublesome.

We heard in the speech from the throne this past week much of the same that we heard over the last four years. We heard a lot of blaming. We saw a lot of finger-pointing at people and other levels of government who have done things that are negatively affecting the province. Anything this government sees as a challenge or that is affecting in a negative way the health and well-being of communities of people who live in this province, they have been able to find a way to blame somebody else. As a matter of fact, some of the processes they have set up over the last four years have been set up particularly and directly so that they can lay blame when the whole thing falls apart. Municipalities are beginning to find that out in spades.

I suggest to you that as time unfolds over the next three to four to six months to a year, as they set their budgets for the coming year and the coming few years and they begin to realize that the pot of money that was there before the election to smooth things over for this government so that nobody could point a finger, so that

there were no ripples, so that there was no concern out there, that those pots of money are not going to be there any more and they're going to be on their own.

Things that were funded by senior levels of government, in particular the provincial government, for a long number of years now are going to be funded primarily on the backs of property owners in those communities. As you all know and we all know, property tax is probably the most regressive form of taxation that this province participates in. We will have people on fixed income, we will have seniors, we will have people who are out of work because of the program this government has brought in, people having to work two and three jobs to make ends meet, finding their property tax rising at an exponential rate, a rate they won't be able to afford.

I think finally the proverbial poop will hit the fan and people will at last begin to realize the program that built your government—with your support to some degree; you are one of the people who don't always support the program—have spun and are imposing on the people of this province.

In the speech from the throne we heard a lot of blaming, a lot of finger-pointing, a lot of, "If they'd only done that," or "If they'd done this, things might have been different"—no taking responsibility for those things that are troubling people at the moment.

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Another thing we saw in the budget which is in keeping with previous speeches from the throne and statements from this government is the usual list of bad actors. Some of you who are new to the chamber here will eventually come to know that there are—

Interjection.

Mr Martin: Because you come from the communities that you live in and have lived through the four years of this government, you probably will understand that there are groups of people who are causing all the problems. The first group, of course, is the poor.

The first thing this government did—and I'll never forget it, that fateful day in July 1995 when I woke up to hear the news on the radio. I was shocked beyond belief that this government had deemed it necessary, in order to right the finances of the provinces, to take 22.6% away from the most marginalized, the most vulnerable and the poorest in our communities. That was their first action, like the bully walking into the playground and looking around and picking the smallest guy in the yard and laying a beating on him just to set the tone. That's how this government set the tone in their first mandate. The very first thing they chose to do in responding to the faith and the confidence that the electorate of this province put in them was to beat up on the poorest and the most marginalized and the weakest in our society.

Well, they found a new group in this speech from the throne. We heard about it, building up to the speech from the throne, and there it was: squeegee kids, the bane of our existence, squeegee kids, the group of people who are going to tear the fabric of our society completely apart: "Boy, we're going to go after them. We're going to get

them and we're going to do the same thing to them that we did to the poor of this province. We're going to make them pay because they have caused us all the problems."

Interjection: Talk to the guy on your left, Tony.

Mr Martin: No, Bill isn't quite so tied in to the ideology and the program. Bill, I don't think, drank the Kool-Aid quite as readily and as much as some of the others did.

Let me read for you what the Church Council on Justice and Corrections says about your program for squeegee kids. They say:

"The Ontario government's 'law-and-order' crackdown on squeegee persons and panhandlers is a recipe for more crime, more fears and less safe places to live, because it further divides communities and people into 'us and them' worlds."

This is in keeping with the pattern that this government has developed over four years where it concerned education, where it concerned health care, where it concerned people in communities trying to put programs together, where it concerned the poor, where it concerned workers and unions. It's always setting up a scenario of "us" and "them" and then scapegoating "them."

"These people who already likely have a housing problem, an education problem, perhaps an addictions problem, now will have a justice problem.

"We believe that nuisance laws which criminalize what some perceive to be annoying actions are not a meaningful, effective response at all. We do not want to discount those citizens who are bothered by panhandling or squeegeeing, but their presence points to deeper social ills that must be addressed by government"—but this government doesn't want to go deep; this government is on the surface trying to find easy answers to very difficult and complex questions—"deeper social ills that must be addressed by government, churches and all citizens. Making our communities healthier is a surer path to safety."

"Our 25 years of experience with the criminal justice system makes it clear that courts and jail are the last place to deal with these social issues. Our justice system already is overcrowded and backlogged with too many cases. We are wasting precious and scarce dollars there that should be reinvested in social spending."

Mr Murdoch: Who said that again? You've got to tell them.

Mr Martin: The Church Council on Justice and Corrections, Bill.

"We want to be clear that we believe panhandlers and squeegee people are members of our society and our communities, and our equal. While we expect their and everyone's behaviour to be responsible and respectful of others, we wonder what taking their livelihood away from them does to make our streets any safer."

Interjection.

Mr Martin: Are any of you over there listening to this? I know Bill is.

"It begs other questions. Why pick on the panhandlers or squeegee kids and not, as others have pointed out,

supertime telephone solicitors, who seem to irritate many more Ontario residents?" You'd agree with that, Bill.

Mr Murdoch: Sure, I agree with that.

Mr Martin: You're having supper; the phone rings and somebody wants to sell you something. We should maybe put them in jail. What do you think?

Mr Murdoch: We should check them out, anyway.

Mr Martin: Check them out, anyway. Give them a justice problem.

"We need to think through our choices about what and who we deem to be criminal, and why, and what this says about our treatment of those different than the majority.

"We invite citizens, churches and politicians to remember that street people and others marginalized need, like the rest of us, to be wanted. We need again and again to make choices to care about all people, and especially those treated as outcasts whose actions are deemed annoying and intrusive by some. The real problems need to be addressed. And churches will have to do their part too in dealing with these pressing issues."

In my conversations with some of the churches that operate in my community of Sault Ste Marie, they're starting to come apart at the seams too, because it seems that every time there's a problem that this government doesn't want to deal with, they push it on to community groups and churches. The churches can only do so much. They only have so much energy and so many resources.

That's the group that's targeted this time. I said in the speech from the throne that we had a year or two ago that this government took unions and criminals and the poor and put them in a bag and shook 'em up and then rolled them out and nobody knew who was what any more. This is what you're doing again. You're taking another group and you're throwing them in the bag and you're doing the same thing. It doesn't lend to good community development. As this group has said, the Church Council on Justice and Corrections, you're going to create more problems than you're solving by taking this approach to squeegee kids. But your approach to squeegee kids is not dissimilar to the approach you're taking to so many other groups in this province. I suggest that we will all reap the negative reward that's not too far down the road.

The other thing we heard in the budget was a great deal of hoopla and bombast and "Aren't we great?" about the economy and how wonderfully the economy is doing and how we're all so much better off under this new regime. I have to tell you, the same as I told you before we went to the electorate, that there is, building in this province, a disease among workers out there that isn't healthy any more. Yes, there are a lot of jobs for people, particularly in the greater Toronto area. I know people who have two or three of them each because it's taking two or three jobs for all of them now, it seems, to pay for the things that they used to be able to pay for with one job four or five years ago—all part-time, all contract, no more confidence any more that they'll have a job down the line. So these people are going to stop, slowly but

surely, investing in things, and the economy will grind to a halt.

Mr Mazzilli: That's because of your friend Bob.

Mr Martin: Well, if you think this is just me talking about, for example, the standard of living of a whole lot of people actually going down in this province and you're wondering why, I'd suggest that you take a look at an article that was written in the Toronto Star this weekend by David Crane. He says that Roger Martin, dean of the University of Toronto's Rotman School of Management, "calculates that if Canada had retained its ranking of third place in the world in per capita gross domestic product, where we were in 1990, instead of falling to ninth spot now, a typical family of four today could have the equivalent of a free car or bigger house."

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What he's saying is that contrary to the picture that this government would have us believe is actually unfolding out there and contrary to some of the predictions of some of the financial planners who want us to invest in their particular fund or business opportunity, the economy of this province, even though it may in the statistics sheets and the Bay Street analysis present as being very positive and exciting, in fact isn't. We're falling further and further behind the rest of the world because we have nothing new to offer.

He's saying here that the problem with the Canadian and Ontario economy is that it is a "me too" economy: The Americans are always ahead of us, Europe is always ahead of us, and we're trying to copy them.

The only way that we are able to make our corporations more profitable is to lay off more people. Every time you turn around, another banking institution or big corporation is looking at how they expand the bottom line. They can't come up with anything more creative because this government is not giving them any help, not showing any leadership, not bringing people together around the challenges of the day like previous governments have done. This government's only program for economic growth and development is this stupid tax cut that is sucking money out of the system and shipping it across the river, shipping it south of the border into the coffers of the robber barons who live in places like New York and London and Tokyo. That's what's happening. Our communities are beginning to come apart at the seams. People are becoming uneasy about their future, and there is no leadership coming from this government around some of those so very important questions.

This is nowhere more important than in northern Ontario, which used to be the engine that drove the economy of Ontario and Canada. This government seems to forget that, for the longest time, resource-based industry has been the bread and butter of our economy.

You're out there grasping at straws, looking at what the Americans are doing, looking at what the Europeans are doing, trying to copy them. In the meantime, we're falling further and further behind when in fact we should be looking for ways to add value to what we do best, which is to harness the resource that is out there, that is

us, and find new ways to develop product and intelligence from that and begin to sell that on the world market. But you don't understand that.

In wrapping up—I'm sorry, Bill, I got carried away and I don't have any time to leave to you; maybe another night—I want to say that some of the challenges that face Sault Ste Marie and northern Ontario, besides the economy, are in the areas of health care, education and the environment.

Interjection: And roads.

Mr Martin: And roads. We need you there giving leadership. We need you there with your resources. We need you there pulling people together around those questions and working with us. Alas, if the track record of the last four years is all that we have to look at and to give us any hope, well, there is no hope, because the speech from the throne that we heard last week did not address any of those very difficult, problematic areas.

I encourage you to go back to the drawing board and find some other way of doing business, because the way you're doing it now is not improving our lot in life.

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke North): It's really quite interesting to be back here. I would like to congratulate all the folks who came through the electoral wars. I hope you have a good four years.

I can't help but hasten back to some of the remarks of the member for Sault Ste Marie etc, because I know the new ridings have about 14 different names on them. It seems that the member from the Soo is still caught back in the 1950s. It's true that northern Ontario's economy reflected a commodity-based economy back in the 1950s and 1960s, and it still has some relevance, but you have to look at the specifics of the value added on that the member wishes us to talk about. But we never hear very much in terms of what would be specific economic development strategies that the member opposite is always advocating we ought to acquire from them.

If I recall, when I got here in 1995 we had a real mess to clean up. You talk about the loss of hope, the loss of economic opportunity. We had hit the very bottom, the total loss of hope of economic opportunity, in 1995. Don't listen to what I have to say. All you had to do was go out and talk to people: taxi drivers at Toronto International, people in this area, people in northern Ontario. Even the member knows that a lot of tourism comes from the Agawa Canyon. People going up there came back with stories of doom and gloom.

I don't think the member has much to recommend in the way of leadership when it comes to the mess we've just started to clean up. We have a long way to go yet.

Thank you very much.

Mr Bradley: I enjoyed the speech of the member for Sault Ste Marie. I know he probably experiences, as we experience in the Niagara region, the situation now of hospital deficits. Before the election, of course, there was all kinds of talk about the money that would be flowing into health care. Some of the Tories who sit on hospital boards were cheering about this and some of the local people were quite happy, except now they're finding out

that they are incurring deficits because of underfunding by the provincial government.

How are they going to deal with those deficits? By further cutting services to patients. Talk to virtually anybody now. If you were in hospital a dozen years ago and if you're in hospital now, there's a substantial difference. The services are not there because there isn't the necessary funding for the hospitals. Yes, they've got their tax cuts, so if they want to take the extra trip over to Spain—the rich people, Conrad Black, somebody like that, take that trip to Spain—or buy a luxury item, they can do it. But basic hospital care has eroded. I don't think there is anybody who in all honesty would challenge that.

Now our hospitals are going to be asked to cut back further the services they provide to people in our communities because they're not going to get the money from this government to run those hospitals now that the election is over.

I mention ophthalmologists. People in the Niagara region now are going to have to head over to Hamilton—these are often elderly people when you're talking about some of these eye problems—because after the election they put the cap back on the ophthalmologists in our area and said, "Why don't we just increase the territory and then we can put that cap on legitimately?"

The people who are going to be adversely impacted are not rich people who can afford to go somewhere and pay themselves. They are people who do not have the wherewithal to do so and are going to be adversely impacted.

The Acting Speaker: Member from Bruce-Grey.

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): I thought you were on the other side of the House.

Mr Murdoch: Well, I was for a while.

Mr Speaker, it is hard to talk about compassion when you listen to the member for Sault Ste Marie. He has more compassion for his area than almost any of the members in here. He does talk so well and he does represent his area so well, but unfortunately he's in the wrong century, I think.

He's worried. Doom and gloom, he says. No, no, you've got it wrong over there. Things are picking up. I know they are in Sault Ste Marie too. You're doing wonderfully up there and they're doing fine. But you've got to look at the point where this whole mess started. It started back about 14 years ago when the people elected a Liberal government.

They said: "Now let's spend; we've got tons of money. Let's spend all the money we can. Let's get this province into a debt position." That's what they wanted to do, and they started spending. Then all of a sudden they said: "Let's marry the NDP guys. Let's get married with those guys," and they formed a little coalition. "Now we can really spend lots of money. We won't fix any services; we won't fix any roads." The member from Kingston talked about roads. They won't fix any of these roads. "We're not going to fix anything. Let's just spend money and everybody will love us."

You saw what happened. Everybody didn't love them. Then the people thought, "Let's try these NDP guys," and then what did we get? Oh, boy, more spending and more spending and nothing fixed. This is the problem.

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You listen to the Liberals go on and say, "You know, service isn't good any more." Medicine has changed, guys. You've got to get into the 1990s here. You're still back in the 1970s, for God's sake. Let's get into real time. Let's get into real life here.

Things are doing really well in Ontario, but the mess that we picked up, as they talk—Jeez, \$10 billion a year you were spending that we didn't have. How long would anybody stay in government with that? It sure showed in how long you guys stayed. They sure kicked you out pretty fast.

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): I feel compelled to comment on comments made by the former two members, the members for Etobicoke North and Bruce-Grey, who referred to the mess they had to clean up, the mess from 14 years ago.

I think it's important to remind the members of the government that the last Liberal government in this province was the last government to balance the budget. That's the kind of mess I could only hope to clean up after this government.

However, when I was campaigning, let me tell you—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order, the member for Bruce-Grey, the member for St Catharines.

Mrs Dombrowsky: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I sense I've struck a sensitive chord. How interesting. With regard to cleaning up a mess, I think it would be worthwhile to reflect a little bit on the state of affairs in which we find ourselves in this province.

What about hospital deficits? What about the pitiable and embarrassing environmental record that we have as a province? What about special-needs students bereft of services they need so they can learn and achieve to their fullest potential? What about the safety of seniors? What about the promises you made to persons with disabilities? You talk about a mess. I think you've got quite a mess to clean up.

Mr Martin: I want to thank the members for Etobicoke North, St Catharines, Bruce-Grey and Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington for their participation in the debate this evening.

The member for Etobicoke North is asking for some suggestions. Let me give you just a couple while I'm at it.

On the economy: The economy of the north continues to struggle, and Sault Ste Marie in particular. Government needs to give leadership and take action, just as we did when we confronted the challenge of Algoma Steel, St Marys Paper, the ACR and Spruce Falls Power and Paper. All over northern Ontario in the early 1990s the government was there giving leadership, putting resources in and restructuring those industries so that they are

making money today. That's the kind of leadership you can give.

On health care: The health care system in the north is still a mess and immediate action is required. Just one small suggestion on the mess that health care is in in northern Ontario: Put some more money into the northern Ontario health travel grant, because you are shipping people to and fro. We had a child in Sault Ste Marie break his leg. He had to be flown to Timmins. Do you know how far Timmins is? Do you know how far that is from home? His father had to take two days off work and his mother had to travel with him.

Interjections.

Mr Martin: Do you think this is funny? Do you think it's funny if your kid breaks his leg and has to travel as far as Timmins to get the damn thing fixed, Bill? That's the problem with your government. You think all of this is funny. It's not funny to the families that have children who are sick and need hospitalization and health care and they can't afford it because they have to travel to Toronto or Timmins or Sudbury to get it.

On education: The predicted closure of schools is now a near reality. Small communities will be hurt the most by the loss of these significant resources, and you're doing it to all of those communities and those people. You'll pay for it sooner or later; it will all come around. It does.

Mr Duncan: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I know we're talking about some historical context in debate. There's one point that was left out, that the member for Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington is the first Liberal elected there since Confederation, and I think she deserves a lot of credit for that.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): It is my pleasure to rise in the House this evening to reply to the speech from the throne of Thursday, October 21.

As Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor noted last week, the speech from the throne traditionally opens each parliamentary session as a symbol in our democratic system. It also provides a valuable opportunity for the government to present its plans and priorities for the coming session of the Legislature to all members of the House and, via our free press, to the Ontario public.

In 1995 the people of Ontario placed their faith in us to bring about major change. Last spring we gained their confidence again because voters realized that there was much more to be done. In last Thursday's throne speech the public saw that we remain committed to bringing about real change so that we can achieve our goal of making Ontario the world's leading jurisdiction. There were many things that were touched on in the throne speech, and I'd like to begin by highlighting a few of those.

For many people in Ontario the first one had to be the commitment to increased health care funding by 20%. We had established ourselves in the previous Legislature as one who lived up to those expectations. We had created an historic level of health care funding and in this

term we have committed to increasing that by 20%. We also recognize that there are many other areas, such as things like the need for organ donations, to be increased. Our plan is to double those donations, and here we have the leadership provided by Don Cherry.

In areas such as welfare we have recognized, as all studies show, that it is impossible for someone who has a drug problem to keep a job. An opportunity to provide drug rehabilitation, then, is a gateway for welfare recipients to make that much-needed change. In the same way, there are studies which demonstrate how important it is to provide literacy opportunities for these people as well.

There are many groundbreaking areas in the throne speech, but one that stands out for me is that which deals with the initiative regarding early childhood development. I'm very pleased that York region has been designated as one of the five areas for this pilot project.

It's clear that we have to provide updated food safety standards and inspection programs from the farm to the plate, and certainly we have the commitment in our ministry to do that.

We also have a SWAT team organized for enforcement in the environment.

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Another area that is highlighted is the question of a task force to look at long-term competitiveness. We recognize how important it is for continued sustained growth within our province, and this requires the work of a great many people to provide input and give us opinion on this.

We have introduced and announced today the advanced usage of the Internet and the commitment of both private sector and the province to provide this. I'm very pleased to see that communities in my riding of York North are included in that framework that has been announced.

Taxpayer protection and balanced budget legislation appeared in the throne speech and, as we all know, was introduced here in the House today.

There are many things that are included in the throne speech, but I would like to talk about a few of those priorities and programs that are outlined in the speech that I know incur much interest and support from the voters in my riding of York North. These included programs that have created secure, high-paying jobs in technology, construction and in companies that have newly invested in Ontario and jobs that allow welfare recipients to put their lives back on track.

I know that opposition members find it difficult to accept the government's job creation success, but it's hard to argue with the record. We know that the private sector is the engine of new job growth in Ontario, but it can't function effectively when government gets in the way. That's why we have reduced business and personal taxes, eliminated the paper nightmare and cut red tape. In fact, in the throne speech is a commitment for a permanent watchdog with regard to red tape. The result is that in our first mandate this government created over half a million new jobs in Ontario, and that's just the beginning.

Our economy is stronger in 1999 compared to 1995. New home construction is up, business investment is up, consumer spending is up and job creation is up. Average after-tax family income is nearly at its 1989 pre-recession level. In York region alone we have an unemployment rate of a low 5.3%. I really want to emphasize that because when we came to office we were looking at a number of 9%. I'm very proud of the fact that we can stand up and say that in York region we have 5.3%. For York North residents, competitiveness spells obtaining and keeping good jobs, protecting their standard of living and improving their quality of life.

I recently had the pleasure of attending the official opening of Schleese Saddlery in Holland Landing. Schleese Saddlery is an excellent example of the kind of growth a business can have in Ontario. In 1986 it began in a 10-square-foot room and today it has provided more than a dozen jobs. It has a very active apprenticeship program and it has a worldwide clientele. It shares in that \$1-billion North American horse saddlery market today.

But despite all this good news, there is more work to be done. Government must provide the tools to help businesses prosper. The Ministry of Economic Development and Trade is working with other ministries to establish a private sector task force to recommend the best way for Ontario to create jobs, remain competitive and promote high-technology development. We are taking the advice of experts in order to examine the complex issues surrounding job creation and promoting high-tech development.

Government has a role to play in promoting a climate for growth in our economy. This requires an investment, and we have taken up this challenge. The \$20-billion public-private SuperBuild Growth Fund will renew Ontario's infrastructure. This includes technology links, hospitals, highways, transit and education institutions. I think it is important to see that it is those underpinnings that allow people to move forward in building their own businesses. They must have those infrastructure investments.

We have also asked Dr Heather Munroe-Blum of the University of Toronto to look at ways to foster a culture of innovation in all sectors of the Ontario economy. The key to prosperity is innovation. We all know about reinventing yourself; otherwise, you get left behind.

Recognizing that small business is a key player in economic growth, we have established a network of small business self-help enterprise centres to foster their growth and development. These offices act as the resource centre for any small business person in need of advice on how to establish or grow their business. We know that 80% of all jobs are created by small and medium business. This is certainly demonstrated by the kind of confidence that the Conference Board of Canada has stated: "Clearly the Ontario economy is presently the strongest among the provinces."

Education and health care services are part of that package that provides for the quality of life that we all enjoy. It seems to me, speaking as a former teacher, that previous to 1995 we had a very costly but not particularly

effective education system. It has been the goal of this government, and I would say the success of this government, to examine those issues through the creation of a funding formula and a rigorous curriculum.

I would like to say, for instance, in the area of the funding formula, that it has given communities like mine the resources to build new schools in a timely fashion. Many of us remember and recognize the overcrowding and the whole issue of portables. These are a legacy of the old system. We are able then to see that in places like York North there is a flexible funding system in place which allows the boards to be able to meet those needs.

At this point I would want to single out for praise the York Region District School Board, whose review by the Education Improvement Commission was released today. To quote the chair of the review team: "The York region board is a well run, sophisticated organization with strong leadership. It has a clear understanding of the challenges it faces, such as rapid growth and social and economic diversity." I would like to add my voice in recognizing the York Region District School Board for having such a clear focus on the needs of students.

Our stronger economy, along with the money we saved by eliminating waste in the system, allowed the government to increase the amount of money spent in the classroom. Our education funding plan guarantees increased classroom dollars to match increases in enrolments, with no cuts to education. This school year, 1999-2000, funding will be \$575 million higher than in 1997. Our top priority remains ensuring that we have a strong economy to support a strong education system and making sure that education dollars are spent in the classrooms, where children need them most.

In York North we want our students to have a quality education that's based on higher standards, that gives them the knowledge and skills they'll need to achieve their full potential. Yet parents have told us that their children weren't doing well in important subjects such as math and English. That is why the Ministry of Education introduced rigorous province-wide standards in our high schools, including a standard curriculum, province-wide literacy testing, mandatory community involvement and more emphasis on the compulsory courses.

2120

The ministry will build on that progress by developing and introducing province-wide student tests on core subjects tied to the new curriculum in every grade. These tests will give parents and teachers clear, easy-to-understand information on how well our students are learning.

In York North we also believe that every Ontario student with good grades should have the chance to attend college or university. To ensure that our young people will have the best foundation possible for tackling the challenges of the next millennium, the Ministry of Education is implementing a clear plan to raise our high school standards. Our balanced approach to governing focuses both on assistance to students and on keeping the economy strong. We need a strong economy to support our colleges and universities and to provide job opportunities after graduation. Already, we are seeing these

major investments being made to our universities. We need properly trained workers to fill those jobs. Plainly and simply, without this approach Ontario will not prosper. History shows this to be true.

Government spending on OSAP has increased by 33% since 1995. Among the next steps will be the introduction of four-year, full-tuition, aiming-for-the-top scholarships to be awarded annually to the top 10,000 high school graduates.

Ontario has the best universities in the country. Maclean's magazine has noted that Ontario has three of the five top medical doctoral universities in Canada, three of the five top comprehensive universities and two of the five top primarily undergraduate universities.

Next I would like to speak for a few moments about health care which, as I already pointed out, received comment in the throne speech with regard to increased funding. Certainly everyone in my riding firmly believes that universal health care is a right of every Ontarian. Making sure every person in Ontario has access to top-quality health care is our most urgent concern. Our government is fully committed to the principles of the Canada Health Act, including universal access to a publicly funded system. That is why in the throne speech we have committed to increase funding by at least 20%. Again, our plan for a stronger economy will allow us to pay for the top quality, publicly funded health care the people of Ontario expect.

Heart disease is a major concern of everyone across the province and it is a growing disease among women. Already, the Ministry of Health has put more than \$97 million into cardiac care. As a result, waiting times are down, with a 35% increase in cardiac procedures since 1995.

In response to the unprecedented growth in York region, our government has committed \$63 million to the expansion of York County Hospital by making it a cardiac care centre, providing a new MRI unit and 1,500 new long-term-care beds for York region. This will go a long way to improving health care access for our residents.

Women have distinct health care needs which the health care system must recognize. In recognition of the health needs of women, the Ministry of Health has expanded breast cancer screening dramatically. The ministry has put in place a guaranteed 60-hour stay in hospital for women and children after childbirth and has also brought together some of the most influential women in Ontario to advise on how we can do better.

In my riding I recently had the pleasure of opening the Oasis day program at Hospice Newmarket, funded by the Ministry of Health. One cannot overestimate how important such a care facility and its outstanding volunteers are to our local community.

Finally, in looking at the initiative of this government with regard to health care, I would like to comment on the opportunity provided by this government with regard to free tuition for medical students who practise in underserviced areas. I have communities in York North which are going to benefit from this.

As outlined in the throne speech, we have a vision for the future. We have a plan for hard-working families who deserve much more. Not only are people with good jobs better able to meet their families' needs, they also help to keep our economy strong by spending and investing more money. Our government is building a strong economy which will create the jobs which will give us the resources to provide the services we all want.

Our vision is for government to provide a framework to ensure a brighter future that will result in an Ontario that is the best place in the world to live, work and raise a family.

The Acting Speaker: It now being 9:30 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 tomorrow afternoon.

The House adjourned at 2126.

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Honourable Gary Carr**

**Président
L'honorable Gary Carr**

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Claude L. DesRosiers**

**Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers**

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 27 October 1999

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 27 octobre 1999

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

PRINCE EDWARD-HASTINGS ECONOMY

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): My statement today is directed to the Premier and to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. It appears, unfortunately, that after four years in power for this government, they have not yet recognized that not all of Ontario is enjoying the prosperity that the greater Toronto area is.

The Prince Edward-Hastings economy is one of these areas. This past week my region was dealt another blow with the news that Bata will cease all production at their Batawa facility. This announcement is just the latest in a series of job losses my region has experienced over the years. These jobs are vital to our local economy and they enable our people to raise their families.

Unemployment in my region is 7.8%, compared to the provincial average of 6.4%. While 6.4% is dismal, 7.8% is tragic. But these numbers don't yet include the effect of Nortel, with 722 jobs gone, and Bata, with 209 jobs gone, and others.

Travelling throughout my riding, I've had the opportunity to meet many workers who have lost their jobs, and they have a message for the Premier: They want help from their government and they need it now. The economic problems facing our region are real, and I can assure you that they're hurting people.

I call upon this government to show some leadership and address the serious economic issues taking place in most parts of this province. Those who are losing their jobs were looking to the throne speech for help. My constituents were hoping that the throne speech would offer some specific proposals to deal with their concerns and give them a fighting chance. Unfortunately, the throne speech made it clear that when it comes to economic issues in eastern Ontario, the Mike Harris government either is not listening or it doesn't care.

Premier, my constituents need action, not rhetoric.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Just so the members know, if it is a member's first statement, I will have a little bit of leeway in terms of the time. I know sometimes it's difficult making the judgment on the time the first time around, so for any of the new members I will allow a little bit of grace on that matter.

WHITE RIBBON CAMPAIGN

Mr Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): As I have in past years, I proudly stand in the House today to mark National White Ribbon Against Pornography Week. The week of October 24 to 31 has been declared WRAP Week across Canada. I have distributed pamphlets and white ribbons to all members of the House and ask that they consider wearing the ribbons to show their opposition to pornography in our society.

The annual white ribbon campaign encourages all citizens to wear the ribbon as an expression of their concern with the proliferation of pornography and its negative effects on our communities. Wearing the ribbon brings awareness to this growing problem. By educating the public, it unites all those who are concerned and highlights the importance to community leaders.

The white ribbon campaign is promoted by the Catholic Women's League, a very active organization in my community of Cambridge and across all of Ontario. I thank all the volunteers for their hard work and also the members of this Legislature for their support of this very important initiative.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I thank the member for his statement. The member will know that for wearing ribbons you need unanimous consent. Would the member like to ask for unanimous consent? Agreed.

ARCHIVES OF ONTARIO

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): Mr Speaker, in beginning, on behalf of my constituents, please accept our congratulations on your appointment as Speaker.

Today I'd like to pay tribute to the important efforts of the Elgin St Thomas Archives Association. Their goal is to see a permanent archives established and to make that archives accessible to the public. I believe that archives play a very important role in preserving our past for future generations.

The Archives of Ontario was established in 1903 with a mandate to collect and preserve Ontario's heritage. This collection has grown to over 200,000 cubic feet, so large that 70% of our heritage is stored off-site. Collections held at the municipal level are in a similar state. Our province is seeing the number of municipalities rapidly shrinking.

I am concerned that during this restructuring process, valuable historic records will be lost. I believe it is up to the province to do something about it. The Ontario

government must act in conjunction with the Archives of Ontario and the Archives Association of Ontario to undertake a consultation process and plan for the future of archives in Ontario. In addition, this government must ensure that there is adequate funding in place for archives.

My hope is to one day see an archives established in all Ontario counties, regions and major cities to preserve our heritage and to keep the past vibrant for the future.

WALKERTON ECONOMY

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey): The other week our fine colleagues of the press painted another doom-and-gloom story about rural Ontario, specifically one of my riding's most beautiful areas, Walkerton. And as usual, the negative press of the Toronto Star got it wrong, painting a picture of a small town facing an economic recession. Walkerton, my friends, is facing anything but that.

As far as great opportunities and quality of life are concerned, Walkerton has everything to offer, from being the seat of Bruce county to the recent launch of the new 125-acre East Ridge business park. This town, with its tree-lined streets and beautiful homes, celebrated its 125th birthday in 1996. Does this sound like a town facing the blues? I don't think so.

This year, the Rotary Club of Walkerton is celebrating 60 years of service. Down in the dumps? No, this town is full of citizens who have overcome what could have been insurmountable changes, a town that has launched, in conjunction with its municipality, a new plan resulting in the development of the Walkerton community development team.

Yes, the spool and bobbin factory did close down 10 years ago, but now the site is being torn down. That in itself is providing jobs, not to mention improving the scenery of the beautiful Saugeen River.

In the wake of the Canadian Tire store closing, three new businesses have sprung up, adding to the unique shopping experience that can only be found in Walkerton.

Walkerton offers a standard of living that many towns would envy, a low crime rate and beautiful scenery, the perfect combination of a rural and urban setting.

Next time you read the negative gloom and doom about small-town Ontario, don't believe it. Small-town Ontario—Walkerton—is doing just fine.

HIGHWAY SAFETY

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): I would like to address my comments to the Minister of Transportation. In the summer, you described your tour on the London-Windsor section of the 401, where an inordinate number of highway deaths occurred, as a "pleasant drive." When you were forced to admit that your pleasant drive was in fact dangerous, you held a highly publicized news conference in Chatham.

As part of your long-overdue announcement, you told us that truck inspections at that section of highway would be carried out on a 24-hour basis. To do this, you would hire more inspectors and reallocate present resources.

As you know, Ministry of Transportation inspectors are responsible for Essex county, which includes Huron Line, Highway 2, Highway 3, Highway 18, Highway 77 and other arterial roads. I've been told that a study done by Ministry of Transportation officials shows that these changes will leave only one inspector for the rest of the areas. This will mean that trucks can simply run circles around the Windsor South inspection station. Obviously, this will have a dramatic effect on the safety of our roads.

Changes to the enforcement system are necessary and long overdue. Despite your promise to hire more officers, your announcement falls far short of providing the necessary tools to do the job. Increased inspection on the 401 should not be to the detriment of safety on the rest of the roads.

I hope it will not take more highway deaths to force you into addressing the problem.

1340

ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES LEGISLATION

Ms Marilyn Churley (Broadview-Greenwood): This Friday, October 29, 1999, will mark the one-year anniversary of the unanimous adoption of a resolution outlining principles that should have been included in the Ontarians with Disabilities Act. I thought it would be useful to remind the government today that we will not forget your betrayal of the disabled community and that disabled people will not forget your betrayal.

It is time to do the right thing. Disabled people are tired of being treated as charity cases. They want to be equal partners, treated with dignity and respect. We've had enough of the vague action plans mentioned in the throne speech.

The disabled community has told you again and again what they want. In 1995 you promised an ODA; in 1998 you introduced a pathetic three-page bill that did nothing to address the barriers to people with disabilities. It was a disgrace and a betrayal. I remember the ODA committee calling it "a kick in the stomach," and that's exactly what it was.

Finally, I want to be clear that this is just one essential first step, but it will not undo all the damage caused by your government. For example, we will continue to bring forward cases of the chaos at the Ontario disability support program, where your under-resourcing and understaffing of this program have meant that files are lost, calls are left unanswered and transportation allowances are cut. It's a disgrace and must stop today.

AIRPORT NOISE

Mr Carl DeFaria (Mississauga East): I'm pleased to rise today to speak about an issue that is important to the

residents of the Rockwood and Fleetwood communities in Mississauga East.

During the election campaign, I had the opportunity to listen to their concerns about airport noise and how it affects their quality of life and the value of their homes. They expressed their frustration with the federal Liberals, who have jurisdiction over the airport but have failed to bring in measures to curb the noise and to restrict the use of the north-south runways.

As the provincial representative, I want to do what I can to help my constituents in the community. I want to inform the House that I am working on a private member's bill to amend section 19 of the Assessment Act to provide as follows: "For the purpose of determining the current value of land used for residential purposes, consideration shall be given to air traffic noise."

I hope all members of this House will be able to support my private member's bill in this regard. This is an important issue in my riding. Airport noise affects the quality of life of my constituents, and I hope I will have the support of this House when I introduce that private member's bill.

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): One of the important parts about being government and about being open and accountable is answering letters. Arrogant governments don't respond to letters, not only from members of Parliament but, more importantly, from members of the public.

Let me give you some examples: to the Minister of Education, several letters—admittedly this was to the minister's predecessor, who was defeated—from one of our members, dated January 6, 1999, February 5, 1999, March 8, 1999—not responded to.

Interjection: None?

Mr Duncan: None. Not one response.

Another one of our members has written to the Minister of Health. This one is most interesting. This is about access to critical care for an individual. This is about someone's health care. I suppose if you're a land developer, a minister will write a letter for you right away. But let me give you an example: October 13, 1998, to the Minister of Health; December 1, 1998, on the same question; April 21 on the same question; October 1, 1999, on the same question—no responses. But they can write to developers.

This government claims that it is here to work for the people, but it really doesn't. If they are not arrogant, they are going to start answering letters from members of Parliament and they are going to answer letters from people in Ontario, not just land developers.

HIGHWAY 407

Mr Toni Skarica (Wentworth-Burlington): In a different vein, I have a good-news story. About an hour ago I was in a groundbreaking ceremony in Oakville, an area

which you have some familiarity with, Mr Speaker. I was there for yet another groundbreaking ceremony for the 407. It was announced that there was another westward expansion towards my riding. You couldn't be there, Mr Speaker, due to your other duties here, but present were Halton Regional Chair Joyce Savoline, Mayor MacIsaac of the city of Burlington, Mayor Mulvale of the town of Oakville, Mayor Krantz of the town of Milton and Mayor Serjeantson of the town of Halton Hills, as well as council Lynda Schreiber from my area. They were joined by the Honourable Cam Jackson, MPP and Minister of Tourism.

As you know, Highway 407's new expansion should reduce traffic on both Regional Road 5 in your riding and the QEW to Oakville and Burlington in both our ridings by 15% to 30% once opened in August 2001. In addition to traffic relief, Highway 407 will provide transportation access to new residential and industrial lands.

The sale of Highway 407 represents great value for the people of Ontario. The privatization means faster construction at no additional cost to the taxpayer. It means more expansions as the 407 expands to the east and west towards my riding, and it means that I can get here quicker for future groundbreaking ceremonies.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I would like to inform the members of the Legislative Assembly that we have today in the Speaker's Gallery a parliamentary delegation from the People's Republic of China. Would you please join me in welcoming our guests.

ORAL QUESTIONS

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): We were informed that the Deputy Premier and the Minister of the Environment would both be here. The Minister of the Environment is here. My question then is for the Minister of the Environment.

Here's a transcript of a radio show from this morning where Gerri-Lynn O'Connor, the mayor of Uxbridge, was interviewed and she said the following with respect to your letter:

"Why is a minister of the provincial government responding to a copy of a letter? Let the application take its course, and I mean certainly a flag went up for this council and for the residents of our community when we see a minister, particularly in light of Janet Ecker, who is our MPP and is in the cabinet and who has taken an arm's distance from this application, stating that once it was before the courts, she didn't want to comment on it," and yet we've got another minister who has gotten deeply involved for whatever reasons.

We're trying to understand the difference between your standards and Janet Ecker's standards. Can you explain to us why she said she wouldn't touch this with a 10-foot pole but, on the other hand, you jumped in with both feet.

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of the Environment, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): It is my pleasure to rise on this issue and reply to the honourable member. I think Janet Ecker and I are actually viewing this from the same angle.

I can report to this House that certainly from my perspective there's nothing in my letter that attempts to interfere with any judicial or quasi-judicial processes. It's indeed not a letter to a judicial or quasi-judicial body; it is a letter from one politician to another politician saying, "Abide by the law." I think it is within my rights, as a minister who has carriage over class EAAs and over environmental assessments, to make that point and I stand by that letter.

Mr McGuinty: We're still trying to figure out who's right.

The Minister of Education, Janet Ecker, said the following when she was interviewed this morning: "I don't think it's appropriate for me to take a position formally or officially on a matter that is before the board. It is for the board to make the determination as they see fit."

We got the mayor of Uxbridge saying that you were wrong to get involved with this, so tell us who's right and who's wrong over there. Is Janet right or are you right? You cannot both be right at the same time. From our perspective she's right and you're wrong. So tell us which it is.

1350

Hon Mr Clement: I'd be happy to elaborate and make clear for the honourable member, who has difficulty understanding, that Janet Ecker and I are on the same side. We do not want to interfere with a judicial or quasi-judicial tribunal.

I'll tell you this: The honourable member has not got his facts right and I'd be happy to correct the record, because the honourable member does not have the decency to do so. When I wrote the letter, this was not subject to the Ontario Municipal Board, it was not a subject that was before the board, it was not referred to the board. So when he stands up in the House and says that I interfered with a board, that board did not exist at that time. He should be aware of that and he should have the decency to correct the record on his own behalf.

Mr McGuinty: This may wash with your colleagues here but it's not washing in Ontario.

This is something else the mayor of Uxbridge said:

"First of all, we in local politics understand the rules of the game and I just really feel that he was given some very poor advice in even responding to a copy of a letter, particularly in light that we have another very dangerous situation in Uxbridge township that we've been trying to get the Ministry of the Environment to deal with for two and a half years and they won't come to the table."

Suddenly you are copied a letter from a developer and this becomes a weighty matter, in your estimation. You decide that you'd better weigh in and you fire off a letter to the regional council. You've got another matter that's been sitting on your plate for two and half years at the ministry and you decide you're not going to do anything about that.

You don't have to answer me. Answer the mayor of Uxbridge. Why was it so very important to you that you weigh in on this matter when you're merely copied a letter from a representative of a developer?

Hon Mr Clement: I'd be happy to do the research for the honourable member, because if he had done his research he'd know that the mayor of Uxbridge got a letter from my predecessor addressing and resolving the issue. Perhaps the honourable member should have better researchers.

Here's another revelation for the honourable member and the caucus on the other side: Not only was there no OMB hearing when I wrote the letter, but the subject of my letter was not before the OMB and is not before the OMB at this time. So the subject of the letter, the class environmental assessment, has nothing to do with the OMB hearing. Perhaps the honourable member needs some help with his research. We'd be happy to provide it on this side of the House.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): New question.

Mr McGuinty: The Minister of the Environment has understood the game of politics for a long time; he is hardly a neophyte when it comes to these matters. He's a minister of the crown. When it comes to educating our ministers, we're talking about Poli Sci 101 here. Everybody knows you don't write these kinds of letters. You don't weigh in on these kinds of situations.

Let's set apart now the issue of the OMB. Why did you, as Minister of the Environment, feel that it was entirely appropriate for you to weigh in on behalf of a developer?

Hon Mr Clement: I find myself correcting the record yet again. I encourage the honourable member and his staff to read the letter. It in no way takes a position on the development, it in no way takes a position in favour of or against the development. It simply requests that, in his due deliberations as regional chair, he act within the class EA regulations and the law. I see no reason, either ethical or legal, why I should not write a similar letter.

Mr McGuinty: That is simply incredible. Nobody is buying that. Are you telling us that on a regular basis in your ministry you sign letters, you get involved in these matters? Is that what you're telling us, and that there's nothing wrong with this whatsoever? Whenever these kinds of matters arise, you get involved, you send off a letter? Whenever any developer sends off a letter to you and says they're trying to accomplish something, you suddenly take advantage of this copied letter and you fire off some kind of directive to a regional municipality, or any municipality in Ontario? Is that what you're telling us that you do? Tell us.

Hon Mr Clement: The letter speaks for itself. It's a matter of public record. It was a matter of public record, incidentally, six weeks ago and the Honourable Leader of the Opposition didn't see fit at that time to raise the issue in any public forum. What I would say to the honourable member is that he's weaving a web here, suggesting that somehow I was unduly influencing the regional chair. I can tell you—here's another revelation for the House; the House should be aware of all the facts—that in a CP newswire story that I have occasion to see before me today, Mr Anderson, who is the regional chair, said yesterday that he felt the letter was neutral and the minister was not taking any position. So who is the honourable member, the Leader of the Opposition, trying to kid in this House? That's the question I have for him.

Mr McGuinty: This is what the mayor said. This was the question put to her: "How do you respond to this letter? What should Mr Clement do?"

Her answer: "Well, I think Mr Clement should stay at arm's distance. It's before the courts. Why is a minister of the provincial government responding to a copy of a letter? Janet Ecker, who is our MPP and is in the cabinet, has taken an arm's distance from this application, stating that once it was before the courts that she didn't want to comment on it."

That was a direct comment that she made to regional councillor Susan Para and myself when we asked her if we could sit down with her and discuss what this application meant to Uxbridge township. Why is it that she decided that it was inappropriate for her to get involved but, on the other hand, you decided, as our protector of the environment, that it was entirely acceptable to you to weigh in on behalf of a developer?

Hon Mr Clement: I find myself correcting the record yet again. Let me say in the simplest of terms so the honourable member can understand: When I wrote the letter there was no OMB hearing. When I wrote the letter it was about the class environmental assessment. When the OMB hearing was raised as an issue, which was after I wrote the letter, the class EA was not part of the OMB hearing. What part of that does he not understand? There was nothing in conflict. There was nothing untoward. There was nothing unethical. There was nothing illegal. If the honourable member has nothing else to talk about in question period, my question to him is, why is he the honourable Leader of the Opposition? Because he is not earning his pay today.

ONTARIO DISABILITY SUPPORT PROGRAM

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Two days ago the Premier stood in his place and tried to convince the people of Ontario that your government somehow is improving services for disabled people. The fact is that the office for disability support is sadly under-resourced and understaffed.

The Premier talks about a 1-800 number. I want you to know that my staff have tried to call the 1-800 number. The most recent experience is that it was busy for 15 minutes. Then when they called again, it rang for about 12 minutes and no one answered. Later on, when they called again, it was answered but by voice mail. Is that what you call helping disabled people?

1400

Then you tried to say that the transportation allowance hasn't been cut, but we have case after case of people who are telling us quite clearly that the transportation allowance has been cut, they can't get to their doctor, they can't get to a food bank, they can't get to their clinic.

Minister, this is starting to sound like the Family Responsibility Office, where you let down all those women and children who are vulnerable. Why are you picking on the most vulnerable people in this province, and when are you going to correct your mistakes?

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs): We created the Ontario disability support program to better meet the needs of the disabled in the province. It takes them off the welfare rolls, a place they never belonged in the first place.

We have listened to our clients who are receiving transportation costs to attend drug and alcohol recovery support groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous, and we'll continue to provide coverage for ODSP recipients to attend such groups under medical transportation.

New requests will be approved where a drug or alcohol recovery support group is recommended by the doctor or psychologist. We will obviously honour the existing transportation costs for various day programs which were covered on September 30, 1999, for those clients who are using them as long as they continue to attend the program.

We continue to cover 80% of discretionary benefits, and if the municipalities would like to offer more of that, we're certainly prepared to do our part. The ODSP does pay for all necessary medical transportation.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Supplementary.

Ms Frances Larkin (Beeches-East York): That was a nice public relations announcement, Minister. Please acknowledge the problem that you have created. I want to stress that it's not staff in the offices; it's the mess you've created in having a botched implementation of transition, in under-resourcing the offices, and in putting through rapid policy changes that haven't been thought through and haven't been communicated.

Peter Kivi, a dialysis patient in my riding who receives benefits and a transportation allowance, received a notice on October 17 that his benefits were suspended as of October 1 because he exceeded his income. They had calculated the transportation allowance as part of the income. This is contrary to the entitlement rules. The ministry has acknowledged that. But they've also said there is no guarantee he's going to get his cheque on

Friday. And guess what, Minister? We're told that there may be thousands of people in the province like this. Surely you know about it.

I've got some questions. How many clients are affected by this? When will they receive this money? Will it be there on Friday? Will it be deposited? Are you going to cut manual cheques? Will you courier them, or will you force all of these disabled people to go to the office to pick up their cheques?

Hon Mr Baird: We weren't pleased with the way disability support programs were offered to the disabled when we were elected. There were backlogs of up to two years, and we found that unacceptable.

We set up a whole new program for people with disabilities to better meet their needs. We removed the label "permanently unemployable" and are providing substantially higher and greater supports for employment services. We are committed to using resources more equitably in order to ensure that an adequate level of transportation costs is available to all Ontarians with disabilities.

These changes aren't easy. I suppose it would have been easier to sit back and do nothing. We'll continue to work to try and improve the lives of people with disabilities. If the member opposite has cases of particular concern, I'd certainly be prepared to look at them on her behalf.

The Speaker: Final supplementary.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Broadview-Greenwood): The minister is either not listening to the question or not listening to the information that we are trying to give him here. We just got confirmation that this is not just one case in Beaches-East York. There could be thousands of disabled people affected this weekend, and the minister is standing there giving out platitudes.

Minister, the member for Beaches-East York asked you some questions, and I want answers. How many clients are affected? Will they receive their cheque by the end of Friday? Will you promise right now to leave this chamber and go look into this situation, find out if there really are, as confirmed to us, thousands of people affected by this, and tell us, if there are, what you're going to do about it so these people get their cheques on time?

Hon Mr Baird: We're committed to improving supports for people with disabilities in the province. Before the province took over the administration of the program, municipalities determined the level of transportation costs and were covered in their respective communities. The result was that the disabled in larger cities and some parts of the province enjoyed greater transportation support than in others. We're certainly committed to increase what is available and make it more equitable across the province, but making improvements is often difficult. We're certainly committed to work and follow through to ensure that the program is delivered in the best way possible. We're creating equity throughout the province by ensuring that a level of service is available to each and every disabled Ontarian.

OAK RIDGES MORaine

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of the Environment. The minister knows, or ought to know, how important the Oak Ridges moraine is in terms of water quality and water supply, not just for the Durham region but for much of the greater Toronto region. But we know that the moraine is under threat of rapid urban development. In fact, you are now on record as supporting one of those development applications by Jay-M Holdings, who make, as we found out yesterday, a lot of contributions to the Conservative Party.

Minister, you know that the mayor of Newmarket, Mr Tom Taylor, said on September 16 that the Oak Ridges moraine cannot be saved without the province getting involved. You are the Minister of the Environment, the last time we checked. Do you believe that the province must get involved and the province must act to protect the Oak Ridges moraine?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of the Environment, minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I thank the honourable member for the question and for his comments to the media, which are at counter-distinction with what he is saying today if he is saying today that I am somehow on the side of a development. He said, I believe it was yesterday, that the letter is not proof of anything illegal, so I thank him for his confidence in my abilities.

But let's get on to the broader issue, which is the issue that I would very much like to have as part of a public policy discussion, which is the challenge in an economy that is booming, in the prosperity that is returning to Ontario, to accommodate all of the people who want to buy houses, who want to create jobs in Ontario, and at the same time preserve a living legacy, if I may use that phrase, on the moraine for future generations. That is precisely the kind of issue on which the honourable member's input and his point of view should be taken into account by my ministry, and I thank him for his comments.

Mr Hampton: Minister, the question is, and the question was, very direct: Do you support protecting the Oak Ridges moraine? Your conduct and the conduct of your associates indicate that you're not in favouring of protecting it. You did write a letter which favours the proposals of Jay-M Holdings, and you do receive a lot of financial contributions to the Conservative Party from Jay-M Holdings.

There is another application out there from Joe Lebovic, who also wants to develop on the Oak Ridges moraine. In fact, there is a lineup of developers who have contributed to Conservative candidates or the Conservative Party who want to develop on the Oak Ridges moraine.

Minister, another very simple, direct question: Would you support a development freeze on the Oak Ridges moraine while you and your party sort out your environ-

mental responsibility and while you sort out your apparent conflicts of interest? Would you support that freeze?

Hon Mr Clement: There's a whole raft of questions in that series by the honourable member. I can tell him this: We are a government that has the responsibility to ensure ecological soundness in very sensitive areas. We think there is a way to indeed ensure that there is a legacy for future generations and at the same time accommodate the massive growth that is associated with the prosperity in which we find ourselves in Ontario.

The honourable member would know that this was an issue that his government was grappling with way back as early as 1991. If his government had actually grappled with it in a sensitive, coherent way, perhaps this question need not have been asked today in the House. But the fact of the matter is that it has landed on our laps, and I can assure the honourable member that this government knows how to balance growth and prosperity with ecological soundness and we will certainly do that in this case as well.

1410

CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): My question is to the Minister of Labour. On the eve of the election announcement, your government passed Bill 17, the Fairness is a Two-Way Street Act, with all kinds of fanfare, billboards and press conferences, at a cost of over \$1 million to the taxpayers. Now your government has chosen not to enforce section 24 of the bill, which states that a person who is not a resident of Ontario and who does not register with the job protection office is guilty of an offence, and upon conviction is liable for substantial fines.

I ask you now, Minister: How much longer must Ontario construction workers suffer? When do you intend to start enforcing section 24 of the bill, or is this just a one-way street? Are you going to ask the Quebec government to withdraw all outstanding fines given to our construction workers? Tell me, Minister, what will you do?

Applause.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): Thank you. It is a different view; I will say that.

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): All saints have a past; all sinners have a future.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Yes, and I've always been one step behind you, Sean. I've noticed that.

First, all three parties endorsed that piece of legislation in this House and it was implemented by this government before the election. Subsequent to the implementation, there have been many spot visits to many construction sites on the Ontario side of the border.

I myself have spoken on a number of occasions to the member from Prescott-Russell and he has advised me of some locations where there have been Quebec workers. We have inspected, we have talked to the workers, we've

asked them to leave the sites, and I think we're implementing this very well. In fact, hundreds of workers from Quebec have been removed from Ontario work sites. I think the offices out along the Quebec-Ontario border have done a very good job.

I've got to say that we want to continue and we'll force the continuation, but I say to the member that if you have sites where you believe these workers are working, I've said to you before, call my office. I've got these sites, we've investigated, and I presume that this has been OK. If it hasn't, let us know.

Mr Lalonde: Minister, we're not enforcing section 24 of the act. No one has been fined yet. They just move from one site to another.

But now tell me, what about SNC Lavalin, whose head office is in Montreal, the recent purchaser of Highway 407, the new contract at the Ottawa airport? I understand you gave them an exemption from Bill 17. Why? Is it because they have big Tory connections like the former Minister of Municipal Affairs, Al Leach, who is a member of their board? Also, I understand Hugh Segal, another big Tory, is on the SNC Lavalin board.

Tell me, Minister, do I pass the word along to other construction companies: "Get a big Tory on your board like SNC Lavalin and you are exempt and then, bingo, you have it made"? Who's next to be exempt? Do you want to give me the list? Who's on the list? Hand it over to me. I would like to see how many have Tory connections.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I know my new good friends Mr Leach and Mr Segal were a part of this corporation before I came to the office. Mr Leach didn't receive this job until after the exemption was given to Lavalin, to be fair.

Secondly, Lavalin was given an exemption not because they're just a Quebec operator. They have huge holdings in Ontario, they have a lot of workers in Ontario, they pay a lot of taxes in Ontario and they do a lot of work in Ontario.

The fact was, when they applied for the exemption, the ministry looked at this and said, considering their holdings in Ontario, considering the taxes they pay in Ontario, this would be one of those corporations that were considered cross-border. It had some investments in Quebec; it had substantial investments in Ontario as well.

Furthermore, this particular company, Lavalin, has been suggested to be a lot of things, but it hasn't been suggested to be a Conservative company. If anything, it's been suggested it's a Liberal company. I suggest they're a little off the mark on that one.

SUPERVISED ACCESS

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): My question is to the Attorney General. I've heard concerns from constituents in my riding of Peterborough regarding safety when it comes to child custody visits. In some instances, custodial and non-custodial parents are concerned for their personal safety and the safety of their children. They want to comply with their child custody agreements

by ensuring a safe and controlled environment for their children.

Could you please tell the Legislature what action this government is taking to assist families with their custody and access concerns?

Hon Jim Flaherty (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): I thank the member for Peterborough for his question. We have taken action. We have established 14 supervised access centres. Supervised access centres provide for visits between children and their non-custodial parents that might otherwise not happen.

The centres also offer an alternative way to resolve access disputes. Almost all referrals to supervised access centres are as the result of court orders, generally because of concerns about the safety of the child or one of the parents; for example, in cases with histories of domestic violence or risk of abduction.

We have also provided funding for new supervised access services in 22 communities across Ontario. This expansion surpasses the government's promise to double the number of supervised access sites from 14 to 28.

Mr Stewart: I personally am extremely supportive of this type of initiative. Anything we can do to protect children I believe has to be encouraged.

I would ask the Attorney General to describe to the Legislature the benefits of the supervised access centres and why this government feels it is important to expand this very valuable program.

Hon Mr Flaherty: The supervised access centres provide safe settings for visits between children and non-custodial parents and other adult relatives in a supervised and secure environment for the children. Supervised access centres help to reduce the emotional toll of family conflict on children and help them to maintain and establish healthier relationships with their parents.

I'm very pleased we've been able to surpass our promise to double the number of sites in the province of Ontario. We have expanded the geographic areas covered as well, and we are now serving all of the Unified Family Court locations with the supervised access program. That complements the mediation and the information services that are available to families in times of difficulty through the Unified Family Courts in Ontario.

Supervised access is an important service of the family court system. The expansion of this initiative is a key part of our ongoing effort to protect vulnerable children and support families.

1420

ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES LEGISLATION

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): It was with great interest that I listened to the Minister of Community and Social Services make the comment that they're committed to doing something for people with disabilities in this province.

My question is for the Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation. Your Premier takes pride in saying that he is a man of his word. During the 1995 election he promised 1.5 million persons in this province with disabilities that he would enact an *Ontarians with Disabilities Act* during his first term in office.

Five years, three ministers and two elections later, there still is no *Ontarians with Disabilities Act*. The Premier callously broke that promise to the people of this province. Because the Premier turned his back on them, 1.5 million people with disabilities continue to face countless barriers in every aspect of their lives, barriers that they wouldn't face if they lived in the United States.

Minister, will you commit today, without qualification, that you will make up for the Premier's lack of integrity and enact an *Ontarians with Disabilities Act* during this term?

Hon Helen Johns (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, minister responsible for seniors and women): As a result of the way the question was worded, it's important for me to correct the record, first off.

Let me say first that in the last term the government implemented a bill called the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act*. As we took it out for consultation, a number of people thought that changes could be made to that bill. So the Premier, in his wisdom, as I consider it, pulled that bill and said, "No, we're going to go back and we're going to look at this bill again because we want to hear what the people of Ontario, and especially the people with disabilities, have to say with respect to this bill."

It's important that the member opposite—I know he's new, so I give him the benefit of the doubt that he might not have known—recognizes that we did put a bill forward. The Premier was good to his word, but he decided that we needed to go back and have a look at this bill one more time. We have planned to do that. We said in the throne speech we will do that, and we continue to keep that promise.

Mr Peters: Minister, Bill 83 was a disaster. The government admitted as much during the throne speech last spring. You're hiding behind that legislation. Your own throne speech last spring portrayed that as inadequate.

Ontarians with disabilities deserve better—a million and a half people. Before the election you talked about introducing legislation. Now, after the election, all you talk about is a vague goal and an action plan. It's been five years, three ministers and two elections—still no ODA.

One year ago this Friday, this House voted unanimously in favour of a resolution asking the government to introduce an effective ODA. The Premier promised the people of this province that an ODA would be enacted in the first term. That pledge was broken. Today, persons with disabilities want to know one thing: When will you introduce an effective *Ontarians with Disabilities Act*? This month? This year? This term? When will you fix the promise that you broke to the people of Ontario?

Hon Mrs Johns: Let me once again reiterate that the Premier truly is keeping his word. He has said we will

come back, we will look at this again, and even in the throne speech he made that commitment. We all made that commitment.

In the throne speech we said as a government that we were going to initiate an action plan. For those who may not know what an action plan is, it's a framework which gives timelines; it talks about what we're going to study, when we're going to come forward with legislation. He said that would happen within this session, and we intend to keep our word on that.

TOURISM

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Southwest): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Tourism. But first I want to take the opportunity to congratulate you on your election one week ago today. I also want to say what a privilege it is to ask the first question of the Minister of Tourism here in the 37th Parliament.

This morning in the Toronto Sun I read an article that the mayor of the city of Toronto, Mel Lastman, is asking the province of Ontario to impose a hotel tax of up to 3% in order to raise money to promote tourism within Toronto. This is obviously an issue that directly affects my constituents in the riding of Scarborough Southwest. Can you tell me where your ministry stands on the issue of raising hotel taxes?

Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister of Tourism): As the honourable member knows, this government does not raise taxes; it cuts taxes. In fact, in our first mandate we cut 69 taxes and we are on track to cut a further 30 taxes, a record for this continent.

This government has no intention of implementing any kind of new hotel tax, as suggested in this morning's media reports. In fact, yesterday the Greater Toronto Hotel and Motel Association met with the mayor to inform him that the hotels in this city were experiencing difficulties with their unusually high municipal property taxes over the last few decades.

The fact that Mel Lastman is even suggesting that a new tax on hotels be reinforced in the city of Toronto clearly shows the need for the Taxpayer Protection and Balanced Budget Act introduced in the House yesterday by this government.

Mr Newman: That's good news indeed for the people of the city of Toronto.

My supplementary question is also for the Minister of Tourism. I read with interest an article on Friday, October 22, last Friday, and in the article in the Toronto Star Mayor Lastman referred to the hotel industry as "corporate welfare bums." Does the mayor of Toronto really understand the challenges faced by the hotel industry in Toronto?

Hon Mr Jackson: I've called the mayor's office and I'm hoping that we can sit down with him and discuss a series of issues relative to the importance of the tourism industry to this great city of Toronto. It's important that

he understand the contributions that every level of government can be making to improve tourism.

The fact is that this government, under Mike Harris, has increased spending on tourism marketing. It's more than doubled the amount of money in the city of Toronto in the last two years, to over \$8.5 million. Yet the city of Toronto—and the mayor should know this—over the last seven years has reduced by over \$3 million the budget that it transfers to Tourism Toronto. Each level of government has a responsibility to promote this important sector.

The fact is, not one new hotel has been built in the city of Toronto for the last decade.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Answer.

Hon Mr Jackson: Therefore, this government and I as minister are committed to expanding jobs in the tourism economy. I look forward to working with the mayor to make sure he understands that every level of government has a responsibility to promote tourism in Ontario.

FAMILY RESPONSIBILITY OFFICE

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a question for the Attorney General. On October 9, your bureaucratic staff told the Toronto Star that the government was abandoning its use of private collection agencies to collect outstanding support payments. That's because it's such a dismal failure. After one year of operation, less than 1% of money owed to recipients was even collected. Twenty-four hours later, in an effort, I believe, to do damage control, your political staff announced that in fact your ministry would continue using private collection agencies to collect arrears and that a second tender was already in the works.

What is also interesting is that the Family Responsibility Office apparently knows nothing about your latest plans, because in a memo we received last week the FRO told us: "As of the end of this month"—October—"the CAPP project is finished. All cases are being returned to the FRO office. All information obtained by the collection agencies will also be redirected to the FRO. The cases will be assigned to individual client service associates directly to continue enforcement."

Minister, which is it? Is this fiasco finally over or do you really intend to continue with round 2 of a pilot project that has been a complete disaster?

Hon Jim Flaherty (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): I thank the member for her question about the Family Responsibility Office. It's important to realize, when you look at the work of the Family Responsibility Office, that since 1995 we're collecting more money than was ever collected by previous governments. This money's being collected, as you know, for spouses and families and children in Ontario who need this money, largely pursuant to court orders. Last year, there was a record \$500 million disbursed to recipients. That's in the last fiscal year. That's about \$135 million more than in the last year of your government, in 1994-95. I say this to the honourable member so

that we have in context the reality of the accomplishments that are happening with the Family Responsibility Office on behalf of spouses, on behalf of children in Ontario.

1430

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Supplementary.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Of course you're collecting more money, because you have more orders filed with the office than there's ever been before. But the fact remains that your much-touted private collection agency scheme managed to collect less than 1% of the almost half a billion dollars outstanding. Now you're going to embark on another private collection agency scheme to collect the arrears that have accumulated over the last three years, the three years during which that office has fallen into complete chaos and disarray.

Once again they don't answer the phone there. Try calling them. Once again they don't respond to e-mail, fax and correspondence. Claimants can't get through; their advocates can't get through. The solution—and please give us a time frame—is to make sure that office is adequately staffed by properly trained people. Three years later, it's still the biggest mess we've ever seen.

Hon Mr Flaherty: The amount collected by the Family Responsibility Office is greater than any other enforcement program in Canada. Let me tell you about the private collection section. The 12-month pilot program was an effort made to collect old debt. This was debt that was more than three years old. This was deemed to be uncollectable in fact. What has happened is that through this 12-month project, \$8 million has either been collected or is on program to go to women and children and other spouses in Ontario. We're proud of that program. It works.

For that reason, we're expanding it. Now we're going to move forward so that debt that's six months or older will be sought to be collected through the private collection services. This is important; it brings money to children and spouses in Ontario.

The Speaker: New question. The member for Toronto Centre-Rosedale.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. May I take this opportunity, on behalf of the residents of Toronto Centre-Rosedale, to congratulate on your election as Speaker. As your member, in the Speaker's apartment I do hope that you'll follow the practice of your predecessor and not get enumerated here.

I'd like to take this opportunity to ask a question of the Minister of Transportation. For the last six weeks I've been travelling around the greater Toronto area, speaking with mayors and regional chairs and commuters. They have a message for me that I'm unable to deliver because the language would be found unparliamentary.

The issue of the gridlock in the greater Toronto area is choking our economic capability. It's diminishing the quality of life for residents. Minister, what are you going to do to unlock the gridlock in the GTA?

Hon David Turnbull (Minister of Transportation):

I thank the honourable member and congratulate him on his first question in the House.

Indeed, our government recognizes the importance of building infrastructure in this province. This is why every year since we have been the government we have spent record amounts of money on the provincial highways. This year is the highest budget in history, at close to \$700 million. We will continue to strengthen the provincial highway system.

Mr Smitherman: I shouldn't be surprised that you hide behind the figures with respect to capital budget for roads and, of course, obfuscate around the impact that your lack of support for transit has had in the greater Toronto area.

The figures are clear. The startling number of reports that have been issued on this problem are there. The Greater Toronto Services Board is struggling to come up with solutions for a comprehensive and integrated transit system and transportation network.

What are you going to do to step in and show some leadership on this issue?

Hon Mr Turnbull: A strong, integrated system of transportation is indeed important. This is why we have realigned the responsibilities and created considerable tax room to allow municipalities to address that responsibility whilst we continue to strengthen the highways of this province. We will continue to strengthen the economy of this province by providing the highway system that is required, which your party, sir, did not do.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): New question. The member for Willowdale.

Applause.

HOMES FOR THE AGED

Mr David Young (Willowdale): Thank you, Mr Speaker, and I thank my friends and colleagues.

Interjection.

Mr Young: I shall do just that, for the lovely greeting.

Mr Speaker, let me start by congratulating you, as have many before me, on your ascendancy to that honourable chair. I want to congratulate you not only on your success but also on the manner in which the campaign was run; and the honourable member who ran against you deserves a similar sort of congratulations. I think it's probably something we can all learn from.

My question is for the minister responsible for seniors' issues. Over the past few weeks we have seen several media reports, particularly in the Toronto area, regarding the state of various rest and retirement homes in the greater Toronto area. There have been numerous reports suggesting that more needs to be done.

I have visited many of these homes, not only during the election campaign that we recently came out of but

also over the past number of months. I've also had the opportunity of meeting with various members of my constituency, including numerous seniors, and this issue has arisen.

Minister, it's not only important to the seniors of my riding but it's also important to the people of Willowdale and undoubtedly to the people of Ontario. It is for that reason that I rise today to ask you to share with us what the government of this province is doing to address this very important issue.

Hon Helen Johns (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, minister responsible for seniors and women): I think it's incumbent on me to recognize that we have seven new members on this side of the House and we're pleased to have each and every one of them with us.

The government of Ontario is committed to working with the retirement home industry to ensure that a self-regulation framework is in effect. We have worked with the Ontario Residential Care Association for the past six months on this very important issue to seniors. We've also encouraged the Ontario Residential Care Association to consult with the Canadian Council on Health Services Accreditation. This organization accredits hospitals, it accredits health care facilities across the province, and what we want to ensure is that they develop a framework in conjunction with ORCA to make sure that an accreditation process exists within the retirement home industry.

We've also ensured that we have legislation in place that allows municipalities to be able to tap into this, such as the Tenant Protection Act and the health promotion act.

Mr Young: I thank the minister. I point out that we in the constituency office in Willowdale have produced numerous materials to attempt to assist seniors with this and other challenges they may encounter. We've recently produced a seniors' guide that I think will be of great benefit. We did so after consultation with various stakeholders, we did so after we consulted with numerous agencies and we did so after we consulted with various municipalities.

My concern, though, regards recent measures taken by the city of Toronto, or lack thereof, and I would like your response, the response of this government to those measures. I want to know your comments, Minister, about how you feel that response from our municipal partners will address this very serious problem.

Hon Mrs Johns: I would just like to say a couple of things and move on to this subject. First of all, you may recognize that the NDP brought forward the Lightman commission in 1990 through 1995, which gave them some suggestions about to deal with this issue. They did nothing. The NDP put through a report in 1989 with respect to municipal regulation and they chose to do nothing to date, so the irony of this week should not escape any of us.

The other thing I would like to say is that I am encouraged by the city of Toronto. They have established a hotline for the retirement industry. They have also sent

out health inspectors to many of these residences to ensure that people are being protected. Previous to the city being amalgamated we had a city of Toronto and Etobicoke and both of those had bylaws which were there to ensure that there was some safety and protection for people within retirement homes. I am encouraged by the city of Toronto. I intend to work with them so that they can enact their own laws, because we have other experience with that such as Ottawa—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): New question.

1440

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): My question is for the Chair of Management Board. You've asked us to tighten our belts for the last five years, all the regular folks across Ontario. I'd like you to explain why today there are hundreds of workers with the Alcohol and Gaming Commission who are at this moment negotiating their contracts, regular folks, hundreds of them across Ontario heading towards a Sunday strike deadline. I'd like you to explain to us why last year you authorized a salary increase for the executive director of the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of 35%. Why did you authorize an increase in salary from \$126,000 to five bucks short of \$170,000?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): As the member of the opposition would know, the contract she's talking about falls under the purview of my colleague the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations.

In regard to her second question, when we combined the two functions of the Alcohol and Gaming Commission—prior to that it was one function and now there's the merger, so some efficiencies have been found—it was recommended that you take a look at the market comparators, you take a look at the amount of work that's now required and you take a look at the scope of what this job entails.

I just want to remind the opposition and the people of Ontario that we have one of the most stringent regulatory climates in the world. We want to make sure, if gaming takes place in this province, that it's well regulated and conducted in an open and fair manner and that children aren't allowed into those premises. We want to make sure that if alcohol is served, it's not served to minors. This is what this man is responsible for.

Mrs Pupatello: So far in the last few months you've had a doubling of staff in the Premier's office. You've added six more cabinet ministers. That's six more limos and six more drivers. Not only has the executive director of the commission had an increase of 35%, but the director of licensing and registration has had a 25% increase in his salary. So never mind this change of jobs; you're increasing all the bosses' salaries.

My question for you is, why is it fair for you to have this kind of increase vetted through Management Board

for you and your bosses but for the rest of the regular folks in Ontario it's a whole different rule?

Hon Mr Hodgson: When you're talking about salaries, the ministries come forward with proposals that are vetted by Management Board so there is control on the money. If you're looking—

Mrs Pupatello: Control. Give me your cheque book.

Hon Mr Hodgson: I'll put our record up against your free-spending ways any day of the week.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order, member for Windsor West.

Hon Mr Hodgson: This comes from a party that doubled spending in this province in their short term in office, which led to the abysmal record that we had to dig ourselves out of.

When specific proposals come forward, they're dealt with on a case-by-case basis in terms of the merit and the qualifications that are required for that job. It's compared to the market. When you're comparing other salary rates, they are compared to the market comparators. In a unionized environment, the union comes forward and management negotiates that. In non-unionized environments, the Civil Service Commission makes those recommendations, if they work for the government. When you work for agencies, boards and commissions, they have arm's-length boards that make those comparisons on what skill set they—

The Speaker: Would the member take his seat. New question.

ABANDONED MINES

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): My question is for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. As you know, when a mine's resources have been depleted, companies are required under the Mining Act to address environmental and health issues before closing a mine. These requirements have not always been in place, and as a result some of the older open pits and mine shafts may become public safety hazards.

Can you tell me what you, as the minister responsible for mining in Ontario, plan to do to address the public's concerns about abandoned mines?

Applause.

Hon Tim Hudak (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): Thank you very much to my colleagues for their kind commendations, and thanks also to the member for Simcoe North. It's an honour to receive his first question in the House, and I'm glad to have him here and congratulate him for his arrival here at the 37th assembly.

I've had the pleasure and the opportunity to travel to over 30 different communities as Minister of Northern Development and Mines to listen to northerners' views, and I want to add too, in my first question in the House, it's an honour as well to represent part of the province so vast, so beautiful, so proud. I'm very pleased and

honoured to be the Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

In fact, on a recent trip to Sudbury I had the pleasure of announcing a new program, a \$27-million investment in rehabilitating abandoned mine sites across the province of Ontario, a very exciting program that's going to bring back land that was previously restricted from public use; some hazards in the ground, for example, that now can be brought back into recreational use for things like hiking and exploring activities, very popular in the north and the rest of Ontario. Important, as well, in bringing back this land to productive use is the potential for further economic development, for commercial use or for further exploration and a mine in the future. It's a very important program for the north, and the \$27 million is going to go a long way for economic growth in the north.

Mr Dunlop: I thank you for that explanation, Minister. As you know, the mining industry dates back well over a century in Ontario. There are a number of mines that ceased operating before strict provincial legislation was in place to regulate mine closures. As a result, there is a lot of work to be done on abandoned sites in many areas of the province. Given that this is a new program and not every site can be rehabilitated immediately, how will your ministry prioritize these sites to decide what locations will receive your immediate attention?

Hon Mr Hudak: I thank the member for the supplemental question. The member is right. In fact, for most of the history of the province there were no strict requirements for closing up abandoned mine sites, and as such this created some hazards across the province, significantly in northern Ontario.

The good news is that, under the Mike Harris government, now the Mining Act requires that each mining project must include a closure plan that will explain and justify how the land will be restored to its natural state upon completion of exploration and mining. The Harris government remains vigilant in ensuring that the Mining Act is enforced to protect our natural environment.

As the member mentioned, under the abandoned mines rehab program we have developed a set of criteria that will be applied to determine which mine sites are of the greatest risk to public health and safety. I want to ensure, as do my colleagues on this side of the House, that those most urgent needs are addressed first.

As I said in Sudbury, we're beginning work this year on 30 sites. That's the first in the four-year program, and there are many more good things to come in this file and in northern development.

VISITOR

Ms Marilyn Churley (Broadview-Greenwood): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Briefly, I just want to take this opportunity to point out to the members in the House that we have a special guest today. Mr Jim Maloway, an NDP member of the Manitoba Legislative Assembly, is with us today.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): That is not a point of order.

PETITIONS

HIGHWAY SAFETY

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas 13 people died during the first seven months of 1999 on Highway 401 between London and Windsor; and

"Whereas traffic levels on all sections of Highway 401 continue to increase; and

"Whereas Canada's number one trade and travel route was designed in the 1950s for fewer vehicles and lighter trucks; and

"Whereas road funding is almost completely paid through vehicle permit and driving licence fees; and

"Whereas Ontario road users pay 28 cents per litre of tax on gasoline, adding up to \$2.7 billion in provincial gas taxes and over \$2.3 billion in federal gas taxes;

"We, the undersigned members of the Canadian Automobile Association and other residents of Ontario, respectfully request the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately upgrade Highway 401 to at least a six-lane highway with full paved shoulders and rumble strips; and

"We respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario place firm pressure on the federal government to invest its gasoline tax revenue in road safety improvements in Ontario."

I will affix my signature to this petition, as I agree with its contents.

1450

PARAMEDICS

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): I have a petition that reads as follows:

"To the Honourable Lieutenant Governor and the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Health this past spring amended O. Reg. 501/97 under the Ambulance Act so that paramedics are considered no longer qualified to do their job if they accumulate a minimum of six demerit points on their driving record;

"Whereas the amended regulation has resulted in at least one paramedic being fired"—that number is now six, two of them from my hometown of Hamilton—"from employment; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Health's regulation is far more punitive and harsh than the Ministry of Transportation's, which monitors and enforces traffic safety through the Highway Traffic Act; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Transportation mails out a notice to drivers at six to nine demerit points and

suspends a person's driver's licence at 15 points for a 30-day period; and

"Whereas none of the other emergency services in Ontario, e.g. fire and police services, are held to the same standard or punished as harshly; and

"Whereas this amended regulation is not needed since other sections of the Ambulance Act protect the public against unsafe driving and/or criminal behaviour by paramedics (specifically O. Reg. 501/97, part III, section 6, subsections 8, 9 and 10); and

"Whereas the Ministry of Health actions are blatantly unjust and punitive, and they discriminate against paramedics;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, beg leave to petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately eliminate any references to the accumulation of demerit points during employment from O. Reg. 501/97 under the Ambulance Act (specifically, part III, section 6, subsection 7), thereby allowing the Highway Traffic Act to apply to paramedics; and

"To order the immediate reinstatement of paramedics who have been unjustly fired under this regulation."

I continue to support these paramedics in their legitimate fight.

WATERLINE INSTALLATION

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): I have a petition which reads as follows. It has been signed by approximately 200 to 300 people.

"We, the undersigned residents in the province of Ontario, draw the attention of the Parliament of Ontario to the following:

"Whereas the town of Bosanquet has billed the ratepayers for the incomplete waterline installation; and

"Whereas the waterline installation interruption is beyond the control of the ratepayers; and

"Whereas the engineering plans were completed for the projects in the spring of 1995, and the contracts were awarded and the waterline installation commenced June 1995; and

"Whereas the Ontario Clean Water Agency was responsible for the trunk line mains on Highway 21 and County Road 7; and

"Whereas all waterlines were to be installed within the width of the road allowances which are the responsibility of the Ontario government and Lambton county, respectively; and

"Whereas work stoppage occurred in November 1996 on Highway 21 between Outer Drive and Army Camp Road and continues to this present day because persons on the camp threatened the agency workers and the agency equipment;

"Therefore, your petitioners call upon Parliament to ensure that the residences, businesses and commercial consumers that could benefit by this waterline are not liable for any interest and further costs as a result of the interrupted waterline installation."

MEDICAL CLINIC

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"We, the people of Massey and surrounding area are proud of our medical clinic. We have appreciated the services of the Elliott Lake doctors for 27 years and wish it to continue."

This is signed by literally hundreds of my constituents from Massey, Lee Valley, Sagamok, Webbwood and other places.

BOTTLE RECYCLING

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Brampton): I wish to table a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It's from the students and teachers of St Mary's school, and it reads as follows:

"We are concerned about the future of Ontario's environment. We know that one-way plastic pop bottles and aluminum cans waste non-renewable resources and energy, create pollution, and 1.5 billion of them end up in landfill or as litter every year in Ontario.

"We know that recycling the other half billion of them is costing too much money and our blue box program is suffering as a result. To try to save their recycling programs, hundreds of municipalities representing over 80% of Ontario's population have passed council resolutions in support of a deposit-return system for beverage containers. We also know that a deposit-return system with refillable bottles works well all over the world and is possible for Ontario. We did it before, we can do it again.

"We ask you to support legislation to implement refillable bottles and a deposit-return system for Ontario."

HENLEY ROWING COURSE

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition that reads as follows:

"Whereas the Henley rowing course in St Catharines is an outstanding rowing facility which has for several decades been the site of hundreds of international rowing competitions;

"Whereas the World Rowing Championship has been held in St Catharines in 1970 and 1999 and has been declared an outstanding success on both occasions;

"Whereas the municipal, provincial and federal governments, along with generous private donors, invested several million dollars in the upgrading of the Henley rowing course to enable the 1999 World Rowing Championship to be held in St Catharines and that as a result the Henley is a first-class rowing facility;

"Whereas the organizing committee of the World Rowing Championship, the annual Royal Canadian Henley Regatta and other prestigious regattas has proven expertise to operate major international rowing competitions;

"Whereas all taxpayers in Ontario will be compelled to contribute to any financial assistance provided by the Ontario government for the Olympic bid for the city of Toronto;

"Whereas the creation of a new rowing facility outside of St Catharines for the Toronto Olympic bid would result in unnecessary expenditures of millions of dollars to duplicate the St Catharines rowing facility;

"Whereas the rowing facility for several recent Olympic Games has been located outside of the sponsoring and host city;

"We, the undersigned, urge the government of Ontario to persuade the Toronto Olympic bid committee to propose the Henley rowing course in St Catharines as a site of the rowing competition for the 2008 Olympic Games."

I affix my signature as I'm in full agreement, and I hand the petition to Lydia Parafianowicz, who is a page from the city of St Catharines.

DRIVER EXAMINATIONS

Mr Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): I have a petition of 2,736 names distributed by a young student constituent of mine, Melisa Roselli. It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas according to the Ministry of Transportation for the province of Ontario there is at least a 10-month backlog for persons wishing to take their road driving test. This situation is prevalent throughout the entire province. With Ontario's booming economy and the current provincial government objectives this is an intolerable situation. This backlog situation could be rectified simply by the hiring of further testing staff or the reopening of examination offices.

"We, the undersigned, petition to the Legislative Assembly as follows;

"That the government of Ontario hire additional Ministry of Transportation road testing staff and open further testing offices to eliminate or substantially reduce the current testing backlog within the province."

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the northern health travel grant was introduced in 1987 in recognition of the fact that northern Ontario residents are often forced to receive treatment outside their own communities because of the lack of available services; and

"Whereas travel, accommodation and other costs have escalated sharply since the program was first put in place, particularly in the area of air travel; and

"Whereas the Ontario government has provided funds so that southern Ontario patients needing care at the Northwestern Ontario Cancer Centre have all their expenses paid while receiving treatment in the north

which creates a double standard for health care delivery in the province; and

"Whereas northern Ontario residents should not receive a different level of health care nor be discriminated against because of their geographic locations;

"Therefore we, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, petition the Ontario Legislature to acknowledge the unfairness and inadequacy of the northern health travel grant program and commit to a review of the program with a goal of providing 100% funding of the travel costs for residents needing care outside their communities until such time as that care is available in our communities."

This is signed by thousands of people. Petitions keep coming in, and I'm proud to add my name to these petitions.

1500

HIGHWAY SAFETY

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas 13 people died during the first seven months of 1999 on Highway 401 between London and Windsor; and

"Whereas traffic levels on all sections of 401 continue to increase; and

"Whereas Canada's number one trade and travel route was designed in the 1950s for fewer vehicles and lighter trucks; and

"Whereas road funding is almost completely paid through vehicle permit and driver licence fees; and

"Whereas Ontario road users pay 28 cents per litre of tax on gasoline, adding up to over \$2.7 billion in provincial gas taxes and over \$2.3 billion in federal gas taxes;

"We, the undersigned members of the Canadian Automobile Association and other residents of Ontario, respectfully request the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately upgrade 401 to at least a six-lane highway with fully paved shoulders and rumble strips; and

"We respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario place firm pressure on the federal government to invest its gasoline tax revenue in road safety improvements in Ontario."

I affix my signature.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I have a petition that reads as follows:

"Whereas Mike Harris is cutting the heart out of many communities by closing hundreds of neighbourhood and community schools across Ontario; and

"Whereas this massive number of school closings all at once will displace many children and put others on longer bus routes; and

"Whereas Mike Harris promised in 1995 not to cut classroom spending but has already cut at least \$1 billion from our schools and is now closing many classrooms completely; and

"Whereas Mike Harris is pitting parent against parent and community against community in the fight to save local schools; and

"Whereas parents and students in the city of Toronto and indeed many other communities across Ontario are calling on the government to stop closing so many of their schools;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows: That the government of Ontario stop closing local schools."

I'm affixing my signature to this document.

RELIGIOUS READINGS IN SCHOOLS

Mr Wayne Wetlaufer (Kitchener Centre): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it is with a great deal of pleasure that I read this.

"Whereas, to honour the children let us make a difference;

"We, the undersigned, are deeply concerned about the waning of morality, of respect for human feelings and life itself. Youth is where our future is.

"Whereas we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Collectively, we feel that some type of religious reading, such as the Lord's Prayer, be reinstated into the public school system. This would be a most important step towards 'world healing.'"

I add my signature to this petition.

HIGHWAY SAFETY

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): I have a petition signed by people from Frankford, Belleville, Picton and Carrying Place expressing concern about Highway 401 and expressing concern that the amount of money that governments collect for the sales tax and for tax on gasoline is not being reinvested.

As one who's had the privilege of working for the once proud Ministry of Transportation back in the old days when the government cared about our road system, I am pleased to add my signature to this petition.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 26, 1999, on the amendment to the motion for an address in reply to the speech of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor at the opening of the session.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I very much appreciate the opportunity to respond to this government's speech from the throne because we believe that there was a lot in the throne speech that misses the point, and similarly, we believe that there are a lot of

issues out there across Ontario that need to be dealt with that the throne speech tried to ignore.

Let me say at the outset that what the government tried to do in its throne speech was to essentially deflect attention away from what we regard as the major issues of the day. The government wants to try to pretend that it has an agenda for dealing with the causes of crime and dealing with crime.

The centre point of this so-called agenda is going out and attacking 300 or 400 squeegee kids, most of whom do their line of work in downtown Toronto. They try to play this up as the ultimate strategy to somehow take on the causes of crime and the manifestation of crime in our society.

It's a wonderful deflection technique, a wonderful deflection attempt, but at its heart it is phony. Let me tell you why it is phony. The government wants us to believe that it has put more police officers on the street, that it is putting more police officers on the street and that that is going to deal with this issue.

Thankfully, we have something called Statistics Canada which does, from time to time, reports and studies on these issues. Statistics Canada recently released a study looking at the number of police officers who are actually available. This is what they found in Ontario: In 1994, there were 20,737 police officers on the street in this province; in 1998, there were fewer police officers, 20,454 police officers in Ontario.

That number itself reveals something. When you add in the population increases in Ontario over that period of time, from 1994 to 1998, the actual deficit in police officers on the street is much larger. In fact, for the province just to get back to where it was in 1994, the province would have to go out and hire today—not next week, not next year; hire today—an additional 1,400 new police officers just to get back to where it was in 1994 in terms of the growth of population and the fact that a number of police officers have retired or gone on to other work.

Let me quote from some of the people who are speaking up out there. The Waterloo police chief says that the region of Waterloo needs 75 more police officers, minimum. He says: "Our police want to focus on community policing and on the serious crimes in our community. They want to be on the street, not shuffling paper or chasing after squeegee kids."

Let me say to the government, your strategy of going after squeegee kids, your attempt to say to people that you have a strategy to deal with the causes of crime and the manifestation of crime was a very nice deflection technique, but at its heart it is hollow and Statistics Canada has revealed for everyone exactly how hollow and how phony it is.

Let me move beyond the deflection and let me get down to some of the other issues that I believe are very important but which were not dealt with in the throne speech at all. As I say, the throne speech tries to deflect attention away from the continuing holes and cracks in our health care system and tries to deflect attention away

from the government's direction in health care, which is to privatize and Americanize more and more of our health care delivery.

Where do we see evidence of the holes and cracks in the health care system? Anyone can look in their own community. In my constituency, the Lake of the Woods hospital in Kenora has had to essentially curtail the surgery which is ordinarily performed in the hospital because there is a chronic shortage of nurses, and they've had to close hospital beds now because of the shortage of nurses.

1510

In another community, Rainy River, a small rural community, none of the nurses in that hospital have been able to take any of their accrued vacation. Why? A chronic shortage of nurses.

In another community—in fact, in a whole series of communities further north, the aboriginal communities—there is a chronic problem now in recruiting nurses. Virtually every nursing station in those communities is short nurses. This has dramatic impacts on the health care that people receive on a day-to-day basis and even more dramatic impacts in terms of public health, because public health nurses get switched into day-to-day acute care nursing.

One manifestation is the growing shortage of nurses across this province, and this government has no strategy to address it. In the part of Ontario that I represent, which takes in 40% of the geography of the province, this government has shut down the only two programs at the community level for the training of registered practical nurses, both in the community of Kenora and in the community of Fort Frances. It has shut them down at the very time when in community after community there is a chronic shortage of nurses developing. I suspect I could go into almost any community in northern Ontario now, almost any community in rural Ontario, and in fact I could go into many small towns and small cities in Ontario, and find similar evidence of the nursing shortage.

What does the government have to say about the nursing shortage in its throne speech? It has absolutely nothing to say. It is as if this very pressing, very important issue which impacts the health care of all kinds of Ontarians didn't exist.

Then there's the issue of the physician shortage or, let's be more exact, the maldistribution of physicians within Ontario. The fact of the matter is that under this government, a problem which has existed in the past has grown much worse; that is, that physicians seem only to want to gravitate towards large cities like Toronto, like Hamilton, like London, like Ottawa, and that now even cities like Windsor, cities like Kitchener, cities like Peterborough and certainly all of the cities and all of the town in northern and rural Ontario are experiencing a physician shortage.

I have to give the government credit. They actually said they were going to do something about this. This is their answer, and I want to get it clearly on the record so

that people understand how unacceptable this answer is: The government says that from now on they will begin a process of subsidizing the tuition fees of medical school students provided they sign a contract that when they finish they will go back to underserviced areas and will work as physicians there.

When I last checked, it takes about five years to get through medical school and to qualify for practice. The government's suggestion is that Ontarians will suffer through a continuing nursing shortage, a continuing maldistribution of physicians, and that five years down the road the government might be able to do something to address that.

I just want to point out—and I would have hoped the Minister of Health would have done this—that this strategy of subsidizing tuition fees with respect to medical school students has been tried before. The underserviced area program for many years had a bursary program. I don't think there's much difference between a bursary and subsidized tuition. The idea behind the bursary program was that if someone was going to school in one of the areas of health care that was identified as a shortage under the underserviced area program, they would receive a bursary.

The bursary program was tried many years ago. Unfortunately, it was found in the majority of cases not to be a success. Why? The people of the underserviced area program will tell you this: It was found not to be a success because when young people go into medical school or nursing school or, let's say, physiotherapy, many of them have not given any thought as to where they want to live, where they want to practise, whether or not they want to practise some kind of speciality and, most of all, what happens if they decide to get married, to have a spouse, and where their spouse wants to relocate or locate. In fact, the underserviced area program found that in about 75% of the cases with the bursaries, people who had originally signed up said later on in their medical education, "I want out of this because I know now, because of changes in my life—I'm married, we have a family, I've decided on a speciality, I have something else that's attracting me elsewhere in the world—I don't want to do this. I want out."

The government's suggestion in terms of the physician shortage is to wait five years and hope that a strategy that hasn't worked in the past—there's been a failure in 75% of the situations in the past—somehow succeeds this time. That is the most charitable analysis you can give to this government's one-off to rural and northern Ontario and small-town and small-city Ontario.

It goes on, and I want to delineate all of these. The government does try to skip by, to ignore, the holes and cracks in the health care system. Even more, it tries to skip by the fact that its general direction for Ontario's health care system is to turn more and more of the health care system over to private corporations for private delivery.

Let's make no mistake about it: That is what is happening overwhelmingly in home care. Non-profit

community organizations like the Victorian Order of Nurses and Red Cross are, in case after case, community after community, being given the back of the hand, and who is moving in? By and large, corporate health care providers, American corporate health care providers like the Olsten Corp, which have a dismal record in the United States. Olsten, convicted of health care fraud in the United States, having to pay a fine in excess of \$70 million because of that health care fraud in the United States, Olsten, which has a despicable record in the United States, is being invited into this province with open arms by this government.

However, it goes beyond that, because people need to look at what happens when you turn health care delivery over to private corporations. The former Conservative government in Manitoba—I say "former" because they are no more—went down this route about six years ago of privatizing and Americanizing home care. After they had gone down the road for about a year and a half, there was such public disaffection, such public unhappiness, that they brought in an independent auditor, an independent analysis, to look at what was happening in home care. The analysis was done by a group of university professors I believe out of Carleton University. They went to Manitoba and sort of followed what was happening in home care. Again it was Olsten Corp, an American private health care provider, which was welcomed into Manitoba.

What they found was this: First of all, they found that Olsten was engaged in a strategy to force down the wages and working conditions of the people who were providing home care, so the workers in the system whom we depend on to deliver quality care were having their wages, their benefits and their working conditions lowered in a deliberate strategy. As a result, many of those registered nurses, registered practical nurses and physiotherapists were leaving the system. They simply said, "I am not going to work in a system which I believe doesn't have integrity any more." So workers were leaving, and they were leaving for good reason.

Then they looked at it from the perspective of patients, and more and more they were finding that patients were being rationed or limited in terms of the home care they were receiving. They were being told in some cases: "This service is no longer covered by the system. This particular procedure is no longer covered by Manitoba health insurance. If you want this, you'll have to purchase it privately." In other cases, patients were being told: "We are going to limit your visit to 10 minutes or 15 minutes a day, and if it takes longer, we're sorry; that's all I've got. I'm on a strict schedule. I can only do this for 15 minutes a day."

The conclusion: Patients were not benefiting from this private, corporate delivery of home care. In fact, the quality of care they were receiving and the hours of care, or the minutes of care, that they were receiving were all declining.

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Who's winning? Well, Olsten was winning. Olsten had put in place a strategy to lower the wages, a strategy to ration the care, and Olsten was showing projections that two or three years out they were going to make increasing profit from the provision of health care. The health care workers lose, the nurses lose, the registered practical nurses lose, the patients lose, but the private corporate deliverer of home care goes to the bank.

I invite members of this government to read the Manitoba study. Since you're following down the same road as your colleagues in Manitoba, you might like to have the benefit of what that independent analysis, that independent audit found.

Let's face facts. Not only are you privatizing home care, but you are privatizing the delivery of long-term care as well. Anyone who reflects on the last four years will note that instead of taking what have been hospital facilities and converting them into long-term-care facilities, you've been closing the public facilities and then turning over the provision of long-term care to private corporate deliverers. Overwhelmingly, your strategy for long-term care is to award the contracts, to award in effect the monopoly to private corporate deliverers.

I invite anyone again to look at where that leads. I would suggest that we're already seeing where it leads if we look at recent news reports. The recent news reports are full of information where seniors are being neglected, where seniors are receiving an inadequate level of care, where seniors are being told, "If you want a higher level of care, you should fork money out of your pocket to pay for it." That is in the news everywhere and that is going to continue to grow.

Why? There's no secret here. Those private providers will want at least 15% off the top for their profit line. If they couldn't get 15% in providing long-term care, according to the rules of economics, they would leave the provision of health care and they would go into some other sector where they could realize a 15% return. They want to take 15% out of the budget.

If I can go back to Olsten for a minute, there's a very instructive example with Olsten. Just a little bit of research would show you that the chief operating officer of Olsten in the year 1997 received close to \$2 million in salary and also close to \$2 million in bonus. In a health care system, I know that money has effectively got to come out of the pockets of patients; it's got to come out of patient care. That's what happens. There's only so much budget for health care. We hear from the Minister of Health of this province all the time that there is so much money available for health care and so hospitals, homes for the aged and home care providers have to make choices. If part of the model now is that the executive of Olsten has to be paid \$4 million a year, that is coming out of patient care. No matter how you try to square the circle or cut the circle, that's what's happening. That is very much the history of health care in the United States.

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): Is that where your \$2 million came from?

Mr Hampton: If the Premier wants to interject, I'd say to the Premier, look at any objective study that's been done of health care in the United States. It is the most expensive health care system in the world; it is one of the least efficient health care systems in the world; it leaves close to 100 million Americans either without health care coverage or with health care coverage that, when you read the exclusion clauses, the exemption clauses and the limitation clauses, doesn't amount to anything.

The American system of health care, provisioned by private corporations, is the least efficient, most expensive health care system in the world. I can't figure out for the life of me why your government wants to emulate it, why you want to adopt the private corporate provision of home care, of long-term care. As we watch over the next four years, more and more we will see the private corporate provision of ambulance services and, I suspect, also public health.

Day by day, week by week, whether through the back door or the side door, what you're doing is Americanizing and privatizing our health care system; and the result is going to be a more expensive health care system, a less efficient health care system, where all kinds of Ontarians are going to fall through the gaps.

I would have wished at least that the government would have identified for people what your agenda is, so that people could understand clearly that that is your agenda, and then we could get into that debate.

But it doesn't end there with the government's attempt to gloss over and ignore what's happening in health care. I looked for some mention in the throne speech of the government's intention to deal with the tragedy that is developing in terms of special education in our schools. I know, as I make my way from community to community across Ontario, that thousands of children who have special needs, who need special education, are falling through the holes and the cracks of the education system.

I also know that this government's agenda is, and will continue to be, not to provide any additional resources for special education, not to provide any additional resources for children with special needs. In fact, this government's agenda will be to flatline education budgets for elementary and secondary schools, and as the number of students in the system grows, it will continue to say to boards of education, "You decide where you're going to cut." The agenda will be to cut more from education, not to deal with the tragedy that's happening in special education across this province.

I looked for some indication in the throne speech that the government recognized that it is dramatically under-investing in our colleges and universities. I looked for some indication that the government was prepared to make those strategic, all-important investments in post-secondary education—colleges and universities—as we move more and more into the knowledge economy, and once again it was empty.

This is the problem: Today in Canada, Ontario ranks last in terms of its per person investment in colleges and universities. Every other province in Canada invests more on a per person basis in colleges and universities than Ontario does. Poor provinces like Newfoundland, provinces like Saskatchewan which are facing a tremendous challenge in terms of their agricultural sector, poor provinces invest more in post-secondary education on a per person basis than Ontario does. That's the reality of the problem in Ontario.

If you put it in North American terms, only two states invest less in their colleges and universities in the United States than Ontario. That's Vermont and New Hampshire. Anyone who checks will find that Vermont and New Hampshire have historically and traditionally been the home of a large number of private universities and private colleges, so those two states believe that they'll leave it to those upper-echelon private institutions. But after that, if you compare Ontario to any other state in the United States, Ontario would rank behind. Even states in the United States that have chronic literacy problems—Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi and, for God's sake, even Arkansas—invest more in their colleges and universities on a per person basis than Ontario.

What is so dramatically wrong with this? We live in a knowledge economy. We all recognize that the most important thing we can do now in this knowledge economy is to invest to ensure that our people, Ontario people, have the best knowledge, the best set of skills, the best well-rounded ability than ever before. That will determine our success economically and socially more than ever. At the very time when it's more pressing than ever to make these investments, Ontario is de-investing. Ontario is going in the opposite direction to virtually every other jurisdiction in North America as they try to find ways to increase their investment in college and university education. Once again, the government tried to ignore this issue completely in their throne speech.

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But that's not the end of it; it goes on. The government tries to ignore the fact, the reality that Ontario now has the second-worst environmental record in North America. Only the state of Texas, a state where they brag, "Anything goes," has a worse environmental record than Ontario.

I won't recite for you all the United Nations reports which list, chapter and verse, the fact that if you do not take care of your natural and physical environment, if you continue to degrade your natural and physical environment, it will come back to bite you big time in terms of health care bills; that the health of our people, the health of our communities is intimately linked to the standards that we set for the protection and the enhancement of our natural and physical environment. Most jurisdictions in the western world, in Europe and—yes, it's true—even the United States, are taking more and more steps to protect and improve their natural and physical environments.

What is happening in Ontario? If you look over the last four years, every year the government cut the investment that it was prepared to make in protecting and improving our environment. Thus, we have the second-worst environmental record in North America, and there was absolutely nothing in the throne speech to indicate that it's going to change or alter its direction in any way. We're going to continue to see the degradation of our environment with all the negative repercussions that will have for the health of our communities and most of all the health of our people.

I looked for some indication in the throne speech that the government had a strategy to deal with the growing daily crisis of homelessness and the lack of affordable housing. We first saw this crisis about three years ago with people who are hard to house, let's face it, people who perhaps have a problem of alcoholism or who have a drug addiction or perhaps are suffering from psychiatric disorders; we first saw that housing crisis in terms of that population, those most unfortunate people. The government I think tried to ignore it. In its language, it tries to say people in that unfortunate situation are not deserving or somehow are the authors of their own fate. So the government tried to ignore the problem of homelessness at that time.

What we saw this fall is that now university and college students who come to places like the University of Waterloo or Sir Wilfrid Laurier University or McMaster or any of the Toronto colleges or universities cannot find a decent place to live in order that they can pursue their education.

We also know—and all it takes is a cursory call to Statistics Canada who keeps track of this—that rents are increasing in major Ontario cities at an astronomical level since the government has essentially cut the heart out of rent controls through its so-called Tenant Protection Act. Landlords are finding a variety of ways to dramatically increase the rent. But we know from similar work that Statistics Canada has done that lower-income families and modest-income families are not enjoying a similar increase in their wages, in their income. So we are seeing more and more families out on the street and that problem is going to continue. It is indeed a crisis that's already happening and it's going to get worse.

What is so bad about this is, I don't know of anyone who can organize their life for work or education or training if they don't have a roof over their head. If you don't have a roof over your head, you don't have an address. If you don't have a roof over your head, you don't have a phone. If you don't have a roof over your head, it's very difficult just to organize any kind of schedule, never mind a work schedule or an education schedule.

The government, by ignoring this problem, seems to be saying it is OK to exclude from Ontario society a growing number of people, that it is OK to exclude them from the economy, it is OK to exclude them from society, to exclude them from the community in general.

There may be some people in Ontario who say, "I'm not too concerned about this." But I just want to again put on the table for public discussion what happens when people are homeless. When people are homeless they become more and more susceptible to very serious chronic diseases.

A public health nurse will tell you that in Toronto 36% of the people who are homeless—I'm not just talking here about single men; I'm talking about families, I'm talking about young people who are trying to find a job—now carry the tuberculosis bacteria. They may not manifest tuberculosis yet, but they carry the bacteria and it is only a matter of time before tuberculosis becomes a very serious problem.

Many people in Ontario perhaps didn't live through the 1940s or 1950s or early 1960s. Many people in Ontario perhaps do not know the history of how much money had to be expended out of the health care budget to get control of tuberculosis and chronic diseases once they found a hold in the population. Tens of millions of dollars, hundreds of millions of dollars had to be expended.

Yet the government here is allowing the very sort of scenario to be created once again which is going to create that problem and lead again to a very serious public health problem which will not respect income categories, will not respect what neighbourhood we live in and will not respect whether we are young or old. Once something like tuberculosis takes hold, it has an incredible capacity to travel. Government seems not to care one whit about this problem.

Just to show how out of step the government is with many other jurisdictions, I want to point out that right now in the large cities in the United States, the federal government is making a consistent and persistent attempt to address some of these problems because they know how serious they are. In fact, as Ontario increasingly steps away from its cities, increasingly abandons its cities, whether in terms of affordable housing or public health or ambulance services, or in terms of public transit or simply the building of roads, Ontario stands back and says, "You're on your own," in the United States they're headed in the opposite direction.

Why? First of all, just let me tell you what they're doing. Let's take Toronto, for example. This, by the way, comes out of the *Globe and Mail*, not an NDP publication. This is the right-of-centre *Globe and Mail*. It points out:

"In the 1970s, Toronto was the envy of large US cities because it successfully put neighbourhoods before expressways. Now bonus points for quality of urban life go south of the border. The explanation is simple: Three levels of government in the United States recognize that cities are the engines driving regional and sometimes national economies and fund them accordingly." They realize that "Every dollar spent on infrastructure—whether it is roads, public housing or social services—more than pays the investment in higher productivity."

"Once reviled by Jane Jacobs in the *Life and Death of Great American Cities*, the United States has profited from her teachings. While the provincial and federal governments in Canada have" allowed cities like Toronto to "languish on its laurels as a world-class city, their US counterparts are rebuilding and reinvesting to further their regional and national self-interest. That's another Jacobs maxim: Organisms will co-operate, if only to compete more effectively."

"The largest infrastructure investment in the United States is the six-year, \$218-billion Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century.... In addition to roads and transit, the US federal government also provides funding for other urban regeneration programs, including the Community Development Block Grant ... the Home Investment Partnership Program ... and the Revitalization of Severely Distressed Public Housing Program..."

They've been there. They recognize that if they're going to be economically successful they have to make those investments in public health, they have to make those investments in the education of the population, they have to make those investments in public infrastructure and housing which allow people to take part in the economy, which allow people to gain the skills that are more and more necessary in that increasingly complex society and to also have the public infrastructure to allow them to get to work, to get home from work and to take part in what is, we all agree, more complex.

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But what is happening here in Ontario? The reverse. I've said this before; I will say it again. What we see in Ontario is a government that is underinvesting in the strategic investments in education, the strategic investments in health and in public health, underinvesting in the protection of the environment and the enhancement of the environment, underinvesting in the necessary public infrastructure which makes us all more economically and socially productive. It is underinvesting in all those things because it has to siphon away the money to finance their much-ballyhooed tax cut, a tax cut which, I invite people to sit down and analyze, at the end of the day only benefits the most well-off among us.

I was hoping that we would see somewhere in the speech from the throne an indication that the government wants to correct that balance somewhat. But what I saw was no indication that you want to correct that balance; in fact, you're going to distort that balance even more.

That brings me to the other things that were not in the throne speech which I think need to be addressed. The government had very little to say about child poverty, almost nothing to say about child poverty, despite the fact that child poverty today in Ontario is at a greater level than ever before and despite the fact that the growth in child poverty is faster in Ontario than in any other province in Canada. At a time when Premier Harris boasts that we're living in economic prosperity—and it's not just Premier Harris—at a time when Jean Chrétien boasts that we're living in economic prosperity, the reality is that more children in this province are living in

poverty and the growth rate of child poverty is greater here than in any other jurisdiction.

Something is wrong with this equation; something is very wrong with this equation. Anyone who has looked at juvenile crime, anyone who has looked at the success of children in school and their success later on in life will tell you that an impoverished childhood is not a good predictor of success. In fact, a chronic impoverished childhood is a predictor of leaving school early, dropping out of school, involvement in crime and, later, unemployment. Again, I looked for something in the throne speech which indicated that the government at least recognized this problem and at least had an idea of what must be done to start to wrestle with it. But again, the problem was completely ignored.

Finally, I want to talk just a bit about the most vulnerable and in many cases the most disadvantaged people in this province: people who are disabled, people who through no fault of their own are dealing with a variety of disabilities. We know the history of this government. This government promised, in 1994 and 1995, to bring in a disabilities act which would restore some fairness and would address the imbalances that disabled people face. What disabled people got instead of legislation to address this was an awful slap in the face. It was a three-page piece of wordage that is frankly shameful—shameful in the way that it cynically treats some of the most disadvantaged people in our society. We have seen since then the government continue in this shameful strategy.

I would say that if the Premier is right that we are indeed living in an economic boom, then for God's sake, we should have the decency as a society to be able to reach out to the most disadvantaged people in our community, the people who through no fault of their own are not in every way able to participate in our economy and in our society, and we should reach out with an attitude and with a direction that we are going to right those wrongs and we are going to bring some balance and we are going to recognize the dignity that they have in their lives and that they ought to be recognized as having.

What did I see in the throne speech? The continuation of the shameful strategy we've seen before. I say to the government, I think you're making a huge mistake here. I hesitate to use this analogy, but I think in a crude sort of way it is the analogy: You went out and made statements, not so many months ago, that you would never under any circumstances do away with the bear hunt, and then somebody brought some polling to you which showed that not only were you saying something that was quite unpopular but you were inflaming the issue, and as an effort in political damage control you had to reverse your position, with much embarrassment to the Minister of Natural Resources and the Premier.

Recognize that the vast majority of people in Ontario believe, are convinced, that we need to address the inequalities, the unfairness, that exist in the lives of disabled Ontarians. They want your government to move forward, and they want you to move forward not in a half-hearted way, not in a half-step, but in a bold way. I looked for

some indication of that in the throne speech, and unfortunately found none.

I want to refer to some other figures. They happen to be in the media today. This is October 27, Canada NewsWire, and it's titled, "Average Compensation for Toronto Chief Executive Officers in 1999 was \$353,900," and it goes on to point out, "Over 80% of all executives received an increase to their base salaries of 4% or more, with the highest increase of 5.8% awarded to chief financial officers." Imagine that: You've got an income of \$354,000 a year, and then you get a 4% or 5% increase on top of that.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Nice work if you can get it.

Mr Hampton: As my colleague from Welland-Thorold says, "Nice work if you can get it."

Let me just contrast what's happening to all those very hard-working women and men who work for the minimum wage. While chief executive officers, who already have an income of \$354,000 a year in the greater Toronto area, got an increase of 4%, all of those people, women and men, mostly women, who work for the minimum wage, have had their wages frozen now for almost five years. For five years they haven't had a pay increase.

As this government has heaped on user fee and user fee, as this government has heaped on more and more copayment fees, administrative fees, the lowest-paid people in this province have not had a wage increase in almost five years.

What's in this story? Well, I invite members of the government to look at the research done by the Centre for Social Justice. It's a group of economists who record not only how the macro-economy is doing, but they also look at how it's being distributed. What they point out is that persistently and consistently under your government, those who are well-off, like these greater Toronto area CEOs, are doing better than ever, have higher incomes than ever. Those people who have lower incomes and modest-income families in fact are seeing their take-home income drop, in part because they haven't received a pay raise, but also in part because they're the people being hit by the \$1,500-a-year increase in tuition fees for college and university, the copayment fees for prescription medicine, the copayment fees to use a public library, to use a recreation centre—all of those things. They're the people who are being hit.

So in fact, at the end of the day, at the end of the year, modest- and middle-income families are worse off in your Ontario, while these CEOs are doing better and better.

The research also shows something else. The so-called middle class, middle-income families are in fact declining. The percentage of families in Ontario that can be classified as middle income—as I understand it, the middle-income category is somewhere between \$30,000 and about \$65,000—is declining under your government. It has gone from about 68% of families down to about 43% of families. That's what's happening.

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Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): They're all getting richer.

Mr Hampton: The Premier says they're all getting richer. Premier, as is usual with your comments, you're about one-tenth correct. Some of them have gotten wealthier. Nine-tenths of them, in fact, are seeing their incomes decline. They're equally being hit by the \$1,500-a-year increase in tuition fees, the increase in health care user fees, the increase in municipal taxes, the increase in library user fees and recreation user fees. You may be able to keep the lid on this for a while, but let's face political experience: After a certain period of time people will start to realize that.

I just want to draw reference to something else the government has said. The government has introduced its legislation, and they referred in the throne speech to their taxpayers protection and balanced budget legislation. They're saying that in the future if you raise any taxes, there must be a referendum. They're bragging that they haven't increased taxes.

I just want to say to the Premier and to all the members of the government, particularly the cabinet ministers, I got a note last week from a fellow who rents crown land. He's got a little, two-room cabin and he rents crown land. He got a notice from your government about three weeks ago that you're increasing the rent from less than \$100 a year to almost \$500 a year, a 500% increase, what is for him a tax. Let's recognize what it is. Let's recognize it—

Interjections.

Mr Hampton: I think that tax increase—

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Order. Stop the clock. Premier. Member.

Mr Hampton: This individual lives in a small community named Ear Falls, which has had a very tough time and has to struggle with some very high levels of unemployment. But imagine his surprise, Premier, when he hears you saying there will be no tax increases and then he gets a notice which says that the Ontario government—let's call it what it is; it's essentially a property tax—is increasing the property tax on that property by 500%.

But it doesn't end there, because everybody who is an angler or a hunter in the province is getting notice over the next little while that in addition they are going to pay a higher tax. The fee, the tax, you're going to charge them to go out and catch a few fish or to go out and enjoy the experience of hunting is also going to go up by not quite as much, not 500% but by a significant amount.

Interjections.

Mr Hampton: This mention of tax increases by the back door is touching a nerve. There's a little twitching going on on the government side.

You can get away with this back-door stuff, this side-door stuff for a while, but don't treat the people of Ontario with contempt. It will take a while and people will see what's going on, they'll figure it out.

I just want to close on another note, because it's very important to people who live where I live in Ontario, people in northern Ontario. We know that gas prices have been increasing in a chronic way but also that private marketers, when they can, on special weekends, have really been boosting up the price.

The government's answer two years ago was to bring out somebody they called the gas-busters. I think people in Ontario recognize now that was frankly the Ghostbusters, because they were a ghost. They didn't do anything, they didn't see anything, they didn't learn anything and they had no impact.

What does the government say in the throne speech? What are they going to do now about higher gas prices, something which they have the legislative competence to regulate or even to lower? What's the government going to do? What's the strategy? The strategy is: Ghostbusters II.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-East York): The sequel.

Mr Hampton: It's the same old movie. They're not going to do anything. They think they can snow-job the people of Ontario again.

I just say to you, the throne speech was bereft of the ideas, of the agenda, of the strategy to deal with the real problems that Ontarians face. There is no agenda to deal with the growing holes and cracks in the health care system. There is no agenda to deal with the growing shortage of nurses, the imbalance in distribution of physicians. There is no strategy to deal with the tragedy of special education that's happening in our elementary and secondary schools. There is no strategy to start to reinvest in our colleges and universities and bring us up to a level—please, please—that is not next to the bottom in North America. There is no strategy to deal with the growing degradation of our environment, the second-worst environmental record in North America. There is no strategy to deal with child poverty. There is no strategy to deal with the growing problem of homelessness and affordable housing. There is no strategy, other than Ghostbusters II, to deal with the problems of consumers and the growing price of gas. There is no strategy other than the continuation of the cynical strategy with respect to people who are disabled.

I'm disappointed in the throne speech. Over the next few weeks, from now until Christmas, we're going to try to outline for this government the kinds of investments that we think should be made. Just as I pointed out, just as the realization is being made in the United States that those infrastructure investments have to be made, that those investments in education have to be made, those investments in public health have to be made, those investments in affordable housing have to be made, I want to outline for this government the kinds of strategies that I think they should be employing. They're workable, they're practical, and I believe they would make us a more productive jurisdiction, both economically and socially. But regrettably, those things aren't going to happen, at least in the short term.

In view of my dissatisfaction with the throne speech, in view of the fact that the government tried a strategy of deflection, tried to pretend it somehow has an agenda to deal with the causes of crime and the manifestation of crime, even though that is hollow because they have fewer police officers on the street than were on the street in 1994, in view of the fact that the government doesn't deal with the real problems Ontarians confront, I move, seconded by my colleague Ms Lankin:

"That the amendment to the motion for an address in reply to the speech of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor at the opening of the session be amended by striking out all of the words after 'Whereas the throne speech' and substituting the following:

"Whereas the throne speech lays out a government agenda that will increase the growing gap between the rich and poor in Ontario, while tightening the squeeze on the middle class; and

"Whereas much of that agenda is supported by an official opposition that is complaining about the tone, rather than the substance, of the government's direction; and

"Whereas the government's policies will continue to enrich the wealthiest in the province while damaging environmental protection, child care, home care, affordable housing, community safety and other areas of primary importance to the people of Ontario; and

"Whereas the protection of the rights of workers and the health and safety of Ontarians on the job will continue to be eroded by the government actions; and

"Whereas the government has repeatedly broken promises to people with disabilities, both to pass an Ontarians with Disabilities Act and to put in place an effective disabilities support program; and

"Whereas working families who are falling farther behind need a government that will address their growing economic insecurity, not funnel more money into the pockets of those who are already well off;

"Therefore, this House regrets that the government has failed to put forward a legislative agenda which deals with the issues of concern to a majority of Ontarians."

1600

The Acting Speaker: Mr Hampton, seconded by Ms Lankin, moves that the amendment to the motion for an address in reply to the speech of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor at the opening of the session be amended by striking out all of the words after "Whereas the throne speech" and substituting the following:

"lays out a government agenda that will increase the growing gap between rich and poor in Ontario, while tightening the squeeze on the middle class; and

"Whereas much of the agenda is supported by an official opposition that is complaining about the tone, rather than the substance, of the government's direction; and

"Whereas the government's policies will continue to enrich the wealthiest in the province while damaging environmental protection, child care, home care, affordable housing, community safety and other areas of primary importance to the people of Ontario; and

"Whereas the protection of the rights of workers and the health and safety of Ontarians on the job will continue to be eroded by the government's actions; and

"Whereas the government has repeatedly broken promises to people with disabilities, both to pass on an Ontarians with Disabilities Act and to put in place an effective disabilities support program;

"Whereas working families who are falling farther behind need a government that will address their growing economic insecurity, not funnel more money into the pockets of those who are already well off;

"Therefore, this House regrets that this government has failed to put forward a legislative agenda which deals with the issues of concern to a majority of Ontarians."

Further debate? We are at the point where the member from North York has completed her speech. We now have questions and comments. The member for Don Valley East.

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): Thank you, Mr Speaker. At the outset, I congratulate you and your colleagues on your appointment to the chair. I know that you will serve fairly and justly.

It's interesting when you look at the throne speech document for what is there but also for what's not in the document. Not one mention of seniors, especially in the International Year of Older Persons, as designated by the United Nations, which all members have celebrated, which all members would recognize. This government doesn't choose to put any mention of seniors in our throne speech. It's no surprise because we have a minister for seniors who refuses to acknowledge that there's a problem in retirement and care homes with the kind of care that our seniors and elderly, disabled and mentally ill people are receiving.

It's interesting to note what also is not in the throne speech. The throne speech makes absolutely no mention of housing. We have a housing crisis. Here in Toronto alone our vacancy rate is well less than 1%. In fact, some time in the next few weeks CMHC is going to be releasing the numbers. It's going to be a very sorry picture and an indictment of this government and their actions, particularly when it comes to the target they have painted on every tenant in this province.

What's happened is that tenants have been forced to pay incredible rent increases, yet at the same time tenant incomes have been dropping at a substantial rate. This government has placed people in an incredibly vulnerable position. It is a shameful act.

The fact that our seniors and our tenants have received absolutely no mention at all in the throne speech shows the arrogant nature of this government, shows that these are groups of people that they don't even care about. It shows just how out of touch this government is, and it's only a few months into their mandate.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It's my privilege to respond to the member from York North's remarks, concluded last night, in response to the speech from the throne. I just want to pick up on the main theme that the

member from York North was trying to make. It's a point that all sides of the House should recall.

Without a strong economy, you can't have a strong health and education social support system. If anyone disagrees with that fundamental premise, clearly the last 10 years where they spent more money and got less service demonstrates the success of that particular approach.

I think a great starting point to pick up on Ms Munro is the seven-point plan in the Blueprint, covered during the election. Very clearly the public supported that and we formed the government, so I think we have a mandate to move ahead with a strong economy.

Clearly there is another initiative that's on the front page of most papers, and it's the balanced budget legislation, the taxpayer protection act. That's a very important fundamental change in spending your way out of every problem. When the Liberals were in power they had the greatest revenue and highest number of people on welfare. Our debt doubled during the period of the last 10 years. No longer can the taxpayer tolerate a government that just spends money to solve problems. We have to do more with less. We do it in our own household, and as a government we're committed it. Really, it's a strong economy. Our plan demonstrates 825,000 net new jobs. Just imagine, keeping this strong economy—it's the small business sector that creates the real jobs in our economy—and being accountable for our actions to the taxpayers of Ontario.

I respect the member for York North. I think she respects the system and we're the government to deliver on our promises.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Elgin-Middlesex-London.

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): Thank you, Mr Speaker, and congratulations on your appointment.

It really is truly an honour and a privilege to be in this House. Serving as a municipal politician, I saw at first hand some of the damage that was done by this government.

There are many areas that were not addressed in this throne speech, and in some of the areas that are talked about, such as the balanced budget, all we're going to see here is another form of downloading to municipalities. It's been unprecedented what municipal politicians have witnessed. I think that this House needs to take into account that municipal politicians are a very important part of the decision-making process.

If we're going to hold the line on new taxes in this province, what you're going to do is download more to municipal governments. You're going to cause property taxes to rise. You're going to cause new user fees to be found.

Mr Frank Mazzilli (London-Fanshawe): More jobs have been created in St Thomas because of this government.

Mr Peters: No, we demonstrated in St Thomas—we recognized that we needed to be fiscally responsible well

before this government was elected in 1995. We recognized in 1992 that we had to get our financial affairs in order.

But what else was not addressed in this throne speech was the environment. We need to do a great deal towards improving environmental controls in this province. Your goal of a 50% reduction in garbage going to landfill sites is not going to be achieved. The city of St Thomas, though, I can tell you, achieved that. We had a great model of a garbage collection system, and I need you as government to do more to help work with municipalities. You're not doing that; you're just passing more off to municipalities.

The 401 is not addressed in the throne speech. Eighty kilometres of the 401 are within my riding. You have not addressed the serious concerns and issues that are faced with the 401.

I will reiterate to the Minister of Citizenship and Culture: Your comments in the throne speech to the Ontarians with Disabilities Act were not appropriate. More needs to be done.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Broadview-Greenwood.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Broadview-Greenwood): Broadview-Greenwood used to be Riverdale. Although I wasn't in the House last night, I guess I should get a life because I was actually watching the proceedings on TV. I did see a portion of the member's speech last night. What disturbs me is what was left out of her speech and all of the government members' speeches that I've heard.

We're in this House today and we raised a very serious issue. It looks like we have a looming crisis within the disabled community. It looks like, and we had it confirmed today, that there may be thousands of people affected by a so-called computer glitch. I notice that the minister is here, but I don't think he paid attention. He didn't run out and see what's going on. None of this was talked about last night or in the throne speech. The reality is that we still do not have an Ontario disabilities act after five years of promise after promise, and just a bare mention of that in the throne speech.

Now today, on top of that, we find out—and we've been trying to point this out all week—that there's a problem with this program, the program where people are supposed to have their lives improved and in fact it's getting worse because of this government. Today we mentioned a crisis in the making where there could be thousands of people not getting their cheques on Friday, thousands of people worried about where they're going to get food to eat, in some cases get their medication, pay their rent. They may have to come down and pick up cheques. How are they going to get there when their transportation has been curtailed, plus they're not getting the—it's a chicken-and-egg.

I am absolutely amazed that this government can make such speeches and not even refer to the disabled in our communities.

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): Thank you very much to the members for Don Valley East, Durham,

Elgin-Middlesex-London, and Broadview-Greenwood. I certainly appreciate the opportunity to respond to some of the issues that have been raised.

There are two that stand out, and one of those is that mentioned by the member from Don Valley East. In his comments he discussed the fact that seniors, he felt, had not been addressed by this throne speech. I think it's important to understand that when a throne speech is crafted, it is crafted with the idea of all citizens in this province. Very clearly, there are some strong messages of support to those people in our community, those seniors who have contributed so much in their working life and their volunteer life. In my riding, in York region, we're talking over 1,500 long-term-care beds. It's ironic that it should come from the opposition, who chose not to introduce one long-term-care bed during their time in office.

It's also interesting to note our commitment to increase by 20% the health care dollar in this province, to raise it beyond the historic elements that it is now. I'd also suggest that the seniors are going to be the recipients of the 20% decline in the provincial portion of residential taxes. These are very direct benefits that the seniors of our province are going to receive as a result of the commitment of this government in the throne speech.

Mr Caplan: I move adjournment of the debate on the throne speech.

The Acting Speaker: Mr Caplan moves adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs): I seek unanimous consent for the House to now recess until 4:30 this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to adjourn until 4:30 this afternoon? Agreed. The House will stand in recess until 4:30.

The House recessed from 1614 to 1630.

The Acting Speaker: Orders of the day.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Government House Leader): Order G4, Mr Speaker.

I think for all members present I will just explain what we expect to go on this afternoon. We're going to try to deal with the amendments to the Legislative Assembly Act as well as deal with our standing orders. I expect that members will be involved in the debate on the standing orders rather than the Legislative Assembly order, and we'll be treating these more or less as a package. That's my hope.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 1999

LOI DE 1999 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI A TRAIT À L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE

Mr Sterling moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 4, An Act respecting the Legislative Assembly and its officers / Projet de loi 4, Loi concernant l'Assemblée législative et ses fonctionnaires.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Debate? Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Government House Leader): Mr Speaker, I had understood that we were going to have our debate on the standing orders, but if we would like to talk with regard to the Legislative Assembly Statute Law Amendment Act, that's fine.

There are two guiding documents which really control this Legislative Assembly. One is the Legislative Assembly Act and the other is the Standing Orders, and we're dealing with both of those this afternoon.

The amendments to the Legislative Assembly Act are primarily focused on the number of members that are required to make up an official party in the Legislature for purposes of appropriation of monies to run their party caucuses and to hire people to do their research and that kind of thing.

Before, there was a requirement for 12 members to make up a recognized party in this Legislature. As you know, in order to save the taxpayers some money and to make our electoral process somewhat less confusing, our government in the 1995 election promised to reduce the number of seats from 130 to whatever number there would be in the House of Commons from Ontario. In other words, there would be an equivalent number, the same number of MPPs, members of provincial Parliament, as federal members of Parliament. In doing that, what has happened is the Legislature has reduced from 130 to 103 members, a reduction of about 20% of the House. This resulted in each of us having fewer members, save and except for the Her Majesty's loyal opposition who went up slightly in the number of members that they have. The third party went from I think it was 16 members—something in that nature—down to nine members.

Shortly after the election, both party leaders said that they would recognize the third party and therefore we are adjusting that number from 12 down to eight in order for the third party, the New Democratic Party, to have an appropriation and funds to run their party activity and to fully participate in Parliament and represent the people who voted for them.

The Legislative Assembly Act also makes some other minor amendments which I'm sure the other members will point out. I look forward to the support of all members of this Legislature. Fortunately, we had very suc-

cessful negotiations between the three House leaders of the three parties to come to the conclusions that we are arriving at today.

This is perhaps the first time that I know of in some considerable period of time where the House leaders have been able to negotiate a package which they have all said we will support. That meant compromise on the part of each one of us, compromise on the part of each of the parties. I think it bodes well for this Parliament. It bodes well that the parties I believe all have a unified purpose, and that is to make this place work as best it can under what political circumstances we have.

I say with great pride, as the government House leader, that we have in fact been able to put our differences aside and come to a common conclusion and all support these rules. I think that means then that when members are speaking in this Legislature, when members are participating in this Legislature, there will be a greater tendency, there will be a greater discipline to in fact follow the rules which we have all agreed upon.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): I'll have a moment to speak at greater length in a moment, but there are a number of other issues that we will be putting on the table over the course of the coming year with respect to the standing orders. We have some thoughts with respect to the freedom of information act, by way of example, and the need to expand people's access to information. We have some thoughts with respect to protecting the budget and staff complement of the environment commissioner and we fully expect that the government in this era of co-operation will want to move on some of those recommendations.

Yes, we were, through a course of sometimes difficult negotiations, able to come up with a package of compromises and I welcome the government House leader's observation that he hopes this portends things to come. I'll take him at his word then that when I put forward a number of changes that we're going to be proposing to the standing orders the government itself will in fact be prepared to discuss and will, based on what he said here today, I'm sure be most likely to agree with some of them, to help make this Legislature function in a more efficient and better way for the people of Ontario and to help make it a Legislature for the 21st century, one where the opposition has the opportunity to question the government, one where we get more time to debate.

I'll look forward to that era of co-operation and that ability to discuss and hopefully find the kinds of compromises that will allow what I know this government said, because the House leader has now said it, this desire to work together to make things work better here for all sides of the House, the opposition and the government.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Broadview-Greenwood): I just want to take a minute to congratulate the three party leaders for coming to this agreement. I, as the whip of our party, was behind the scenes and every now and then our House leader would come and consult with me. I know a little bit about the comings and goings and things

on the table, off the table, and I know my House leader is getting very nervous now because we haven't voted on the deal yet and I'm up on my feet talking about things being on and off the table. So I won't go any further, but I do want to take this opportunity to congratulate the three.

It's very unusual, as anybody who watches this channel and anybody who's ever been in this Legislature knows, to see a situation where three party leaders can get together and come to an agreement that basically everybody's happy with. Obviously, everybody had to give and take and there are some things that each party would like to see changed I suppose in some ways, but I was very gratified to see everybody smiling at the end of the process.

It bodes well for the people of Ontario, what this means not just now for the NDP with nine members but in a smaller House. In fact, we all agree some of this should have been done beforehand. It wasn't, and what this means is for future parliaments some other party—I will be careful, House leader—may be in this situation some day with even fewer seats. Who knows? I do want to say that this bodes well for the people of Ontario. We've kept a three-party system that we're all familiar with and works well for us in Ontario in representing the people of Ontario.

Again, let me congratulate the House leaders and wish us all good luck now in carrying out our duties for the people of Ontario.

1640

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I must say that the arrangement that is made through this particular piece of legislation is much more benign than what we've seen in the past. It may be that if I get a chance to speak a little later on, I may want to review some of the draconian measures which were imposed by the Harris government on the opposition and talk a little bit about this House.

What I wanted to do in the two minutes in response to the minister was to commend the three party House leaders, who had a very difficult time coming to an agreement. There were substantial changes that took place after the last election: a new government coming into office or a renewed mandate often has some new ideas as to how it would like to treat the Legislature, in particular the opposition.

I know that the discussions are difficult. The House leader for the Liberal Party, Dwight Duncan, member for Windsor-St Clair, did an outstanding job in his negotiating and kept in touch with members of the caucus. I'm sure his hair is turning grey now. That doesn't happen to the government House leader because he has already reached that stage. But for each of the House leaders it's difficult, because they come back to their members and each member has a pet project with which to deal.

I want to say about this House—it is my opinion, being here in my 23rd year now—that this House is virtually irrelevant to the province of Ontario and the governing of Ontario. That's very difficult for me to say,

because if you say, "Well, why would you run for a House that's irrelevant?"—I just have seen a change of the rules by three political parties: the Liberal Party, then the NDP and then the Conservatives, which have shrunk the role, which have diminished the role of the opposition, indeed of the individual member of the Legislature. That's why the suggestions of my House leader, Dwight Duncan, should be taken into account as to how the role of the members can be enhanced through further changes.

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): I also want to compliment all three House leaders, in particular our fine House leader, Mr Duncan, for the negotiations that have taken place. May I say, though, that I come from a new riding, Thunder Bay-Superior North, which is probably a pretty good example of the need for some of these changes that are taking place, a certain understanding of the fact that as the government House leader mentioned, the ridings have been dropped from 130 to 103.

As a result, there was an amalgamation of many of the ridings. My riding was formerly Port Arthur, which I was proud to serve for four years. I'm very grateful to the people of Thunder Bay-Superior North that they have elected me for this term. But the riding has changed in a rather dramatic way. From previously representing simply the north side of Thunder Bay and some areas outside that, I now in essence have taken over a large part of the previous Lake Nipigon riding, which puts real demands in a very different way on me, as it does on you as well, Mr Speaker, in terms of your largely expanded riding.

Many of the issues we will be discussing today that are in the agreement are ones that are truly crucial so that we can represent our constituency well. Having spent most of the summer travelling throughout my new riding and having seen some of those challenges, I am pleased that there has been such co-operation and such understanding brought forward in terms of some of these decisions.

We look forward to further debate today to do so. I hope I get an opportunity at some other time, perhaps later this afternoon, to go through my riding so people can understand what the large new riding of Thunder Bay-Superior North is all about. There are a number of communities, 10 First Nations communities, all of them vibrant communities that truly have exciting things happening, many projects that are going forward that I want to work very hard on. I look forward to further discussion today and having an opportunity myself later on to talk further about my riding.

The Acting Speaker: Response?

Hon Mr Sterling: I didn't intend a long debate at the first setting out of this. The member from Thunder Bay recognizes that the government acceded to giving a significant boost in resources for seven northern ridings even though we, this government, only occupy one of those ridings. That's a recognition of fairness, a fairness in terms of trying to strike these.

We've heard from I guess one of the longest-sitting parliamentarians here, Mr Bradley, from St Catharines.

In spite of his interventions about what he wanted in these standing orders we couldn't include them all. Jim, I just want to say to you, we're not going to have an appointed Senate at the provincial level.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Duncan: I believe we have unanimous consent for me to split my time with the member for St Catharines.

The Acting Speaker: Is that agreed? Agreed.

Mr Duncan: Let me elaborate a little bit on what I spoke of a few minutes ago. My colleague from St Catharines quite correctly pointed out that there have been significant changes to the rules in this House prior to this agreement that we have reached today.

The official opposition, for its part, intends to bring a number of its own proposals to make this Legislature work better, to make it more relevant to the people of Ontario. My colleague from St Catharines, who has been here a long time, understands and remembers the history of this chamber and how important it could be once again if only we took seriously our commitment to recognizing the role of individual members both on the opposition side and, dare I suggest to my colleagues on the other side, in the government back benches, those who aren't in cabinet. So we'll be bringing those changes forward.

Our objective when we entered into these negotiations was that the rules of the House need to reflect what the people said and did on June 3, 1999. To that extent, I believe we've achieved that objective within reasonable boundaries. I believe all three parties, as represented by their House leaders, understood that.

Certainly there was give and take. We didn't get everything we wanted, but I believe we have corrected a situation which we felt was unfair to our party over the last nine years in terms of the allocation of time and questions, time in the Legislature and money for causes. I believe that what we've set up is a template so that in future legislatures it will be easier to come to terms with these changes. Other than the fact that this government will be changed in four years, I don't expect the kinds of changes we saw resulting from the Fewer Politicians Act that the government introduced.

I welcome the comments of the government House leader today, his willingness to co-operate and to work together to make this place once again the kind of relevant legislative body it was when my colleague from St Catharines began his career several years ago.

I look forward to the opportunity of debating with my colleagues in the New Democratic Party, because they are a party, and that needs to be said. They campaigned together with a common leader, a common theme, and they have a rich and deep tradition in this place. I think the agreement we reached was appropriate and reflects the will of the people of Ontario as expressed on June 3 of this year.

With that, I turn it over to my distinguished colleague from St Catharines. I should tell you that those of us who have not—

Hon Helen Johns (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, minister responsible for seniors and women): You've had a change of heart.

Mr Duncan: Pardon me? What I wanted to suggest was—to those of us who don't have the same amount of experience, we've come to refer to the member for St Catharines as Yoda. Yoda, you'll recall from the Star Wars movie, was the wise and experienced Jedi knight who trained all of the younger members in the ways of the Force and how to use the Force to conquer the dark side. With his guidance and his representation, let me tell you, the forces of good will defeat the dark side in four years' time.

Mr Bradley: I want to thank the member for Windsor-St Clair for the very kind and mercifully brief introduction this evening.

The government House leader, who was elected to the Legislature the same time I was, in June 1977, has also seen some significant changes take place. I must say that what I liked about this set of changes—even though I don't necessarily find all of them changes I would cheerlead about, I do find them acceptable and I know how the procedure of give and take works.

1650

What I think was absent previous to this was any meaningful negotiation between whoever was the government House leader of the day and the opposition House leaders. There was from on high given an edict that the rules would change substantially in June 1993, when Dave Cooke, the member for Windsor-Riverside at that time, was given orders to make substantial changes to the Legislative Assembly procedures to limit the activity of the opposition and the power of the opposition—I think ultimately it reflects on all members of the Legislature—and then, of course, the draconian measures brought in I think under Mr Johnson in that case. He simply was the person taking the orders from the Premier's office. They had the now Minister of Community and Social Services, who I think was age 29 by then, who was coming forward with all these changes—

Hon Mr Baird: Now 30.

Mr Bradley: He's now 30, he tells me. He was coming forward with changes which were written in the office of—who's the chief adviser again?—Guy Giorno, the chief adviser and the person with the most power in the government, and others who contributed to it.

What has happened as a result of these? What's happened as a result of these is that the House has become relatively ineffective and relatively irrelevant. It really amounts now to WWF wrestling. In other words, because you've removed legitimate means of slowing down the government or bringing criticism upon the government, the opposition now must act in an extraordinary way in order to gain the same attention.

Where I first saw this happen was with bell-ringing. I was in opposition at that time; the Conservatives were in power. Federally I think it was the opposite then, and the Conservatives had used the bell-ringing. It meant that bells rang for long periods of time and the House was

tied up. Was that good? No, it wasn't. I did not like that tactic, but it was a tactic that had to be used to slow the government of the day down and to have them pause and reflect upon controversial legislation.

That came about because we removed the filibuster. The filibuster, for those who are at home and may not be familiar with the term, was a very long speech. The one I remember most in this Legislature was by Peter Kormos, who is the member now for Niagara Centre, then for Welland-Thorold, who took great exception to a bill on automobile insurance brought in by the Liberals and spoke for some 17 hours in succession. As a result of that, the Liberal House leader of the day brought in rule changes which would eliminate that possibility.

I think upon reflection, allowing longer speeches and allowing more speeches is preferable to finding tricks to bring the Legislature to a complete standstill. We in the opposition in the last Parliament resorted to those tricks. One night the House was brought to a complete standstill because the Sergeant at Arms was not allowed to physically remove a member of the opposition from the House. It's not something that the opposition looked forward too. There was not great euphoria, though it was something different and the news media was interested. It was a tactic that was employed because there was virtually no other way of getting the attention of the government.

I was reading some of the comments of the now government House leader and of Ernie Eves, who was the previous government House leader, about the role of the opposition. I'm not doing it to be mischievous because I'm not even going to read it into the record—I can't really find it right now and didn't do the research for that—other than to say that both made an excellent point about why it's important to have an opposition with the power to at least slow the government down.

Government is elected and has the right to govern, but it's important that the government pause and look at its legislation. Some of the best legislation I've seen—and the government House leader made reference to this in a eulogy to Ross Hall the other day, Ross Hall being the Liberal member for Lincoln who passed away recently and whom we were eulogizing in this Legislature. He said that when you were in a minority Parliament, both sides had a responsibility. The government had to be acutely aware of what the opposition was thinking, but also the opposition couldn't oppose simply for the reason that it's there in opposition to oppose. It had to take some responsibility for legislation. It worked well. I'm not advocating minority Parliament all the time, but I'm going to tell you, I was amazed with that.

A person who was good on the US side and who just died a couple of days ago was Senator John Chafee, a Republican from Rhode Island. He was one of the last of what they call "centrists," a bipartisan person. You used to see in the US Senate some good bipartisan agreements. One of them was the Clean Air Act, by the way, that the former Minister of the Environment would be interested in and is aware of. That came about as a result of people

like John Chafee of Rhode Island, a Republican, and Senator Stafford of Vermont, Senator Mitchell of Maine and so on. These people got together on a bipartisan basis and developed good legislation.

My observation in this House is that it has never been so divided ideologically as I've seen it in the last few years. Some people like that. They say, "Hey, that's the way it's got to be." I don't. I've never liked it that way, but it is, and I understand why that is the case. There is partisanship in politics, and we have to understand that.

But what I've seen is a continuing erosion of the power of individual elected members. At the risk of being repetitious, I don't want to centre in only on Ontario, but let me look right around the country and in other jurisdictions. The offices of the premiers or the prime ministers or the presidents have become extremely powerful these days. The individual elected members, particularly new members when they get elected, think they have some power and influence. Well, you'll get patted on the head and you'll be told that you have some role and responsibility, but essentially it will be the unelected political advisers to Premiers or Prime Ministers who are the people who are responsible.

Now I'm going to get some orders from my House leader on how much time I have and what I should talk about.

Interjection.

Mr Bradley: He wants me to wrap it up fairly soon, I see. I'm much prepared to do that. I simply want to contrast this particular group of changes as one that is much more built on consensus than the others. Even though I think the House has become largely irrelevant today and without much power, I want to commend the government House leader and the other two House leaders for making an effort to reach a consensus and to make the atmosphere just slightly better in this House and to make members' roles slightly more meaningful.

I hope this is just a start and that we can continue to build upon that to restore some of that responsibility and power to elected members of the Legislature.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Further debate?

Questions and comments? The Chair recognizes the member for—

Ms Churley: Broadview-Greenwood. It's going to take a while, I know, Speaker. You're having to look at all those photos and ridings again.

As always, I listened quite intently to—should I say Yoda?—the member for St Catharines. I'm sorry, member for St Catharines, but that's it for you. You're Yoda forever now.

The member for St Catharines raised a very good point. I would say that it's a very good thing that two of the three House leaders who were negotiating have experienced both opposition and government. Although the Liberal House leader had not experienced government, I know that he was working closely with his mentor, our good friend from St Catharines, better known as Yoda now.

But one of the points he makes, and I think it's very important—frankly, I saw it as a new member in our government and I saw it with new members in the last Parliament; I haven't seen it yet, there hasn't been enough time, and I hope it doesn't happen—is that new members come here and get into government and see opposition acting up and actually sometimes stalling legislation or demanding certain things, and there's a bit of, "We're the government." What we are hearing now already is, "The debate is over."

1700

But the opposition plays a very important role. I'm afraid that what happens is new members—and it happened to many of us too, coming right into government—are very offended and insulted when you see this pesky opposition trying to, in your view, hold things up when you have a majority and you feel you should be able to get it through like that. We experienced it. I believe, from what the member for St Catharines said, that the Liberals before changed rules as well, and now your government came in the last session and I think, again, because there were a few things which were perceived as quite draconian, rules were changed even further and that's something we really have to keep an eye on.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): Let me begin by first of all thanking both my counterparts—Norm Sterling, the government House leader, and Dwight Duncan, the Liberal House leader—for a job well done on behalf of the people. I realize that could seem very self-serving, given the fact that we have something today, assuming the vote goes the way that Norm tells me it's going to, as opposed to what we had before.

There was a real spirit of co-operation, a desire to try and find an agreement, and I don't think that people should underestimate how far apart we were when we began. Most of my negotiating experience in the past has been with two parties. When you have three parties present with three separate agendas, it becomes a whole different game of chess; and make no mistake, there were a couple of times during the debate where we nearly went into the ditch and almost didn't get to this point, notwithstanding our desire to reach an agreement. There's a lot of emotion involved here and a lot of history, a lot of tradition and a lot of principles, and they're not always the same among the three parties. This was not an easy road.

I want to say the great respect that I have for my two counterparts in terms of the personal integrity that they brought to the table. I would say to Speaker Carr that the relationship we have developed will serve him well, as well as the people of Ontario. When we get into those situations where there is a legitimate impasse—we've got hard-line politics, hard-line emotions, hard-line passion and principles happening here in this place and the business of the Parliament seizes up when the political will eventually overtakes us—I think we as House leaders will be able to sit down and find our way through what-

ever situation we've all got ourselves into and find a resolve to it.

I also want to express—and I think this is probably the first time I have ever done it and likely the last—a thanks to the Premier because I think he showed great leadership on this issue at a time when it wasn't so motherhood that, "Oh yes, the NDP will get party status, it's just a matter of working out the details." There were those advocating at the time that this not happen, and I think it was the intervention of the Premier, who stated clearly and unequivocally that the government was in support of the fact that we would have party status, and that then launched the negotiations because it shifted some other people's positions and that gave us the environment to allow the negotiations to begin and ultimately to prosper.

While I am thanking individuals—because this was an important issue for us and certainly given the feedback we've all got from New Democrats across Ontario, both members and supporters who believe in the things we advocate. This was an important part of Ontario's history, an important part of democracy.

Two of the people who played an important role happen to be right here beside me and I think that's quite convenient: Marilyn Churley, our whip, and our deputy leader, Frances Larkin, both of whom stayed here late hours, early in the morning, available by phone. I want to put on the record how much I appreciate their playing that role and the advice and assistance they provided. They played a big role in getting us to this point.

In this context—the government House leader talked about the fact that they changed the number of seats in this House to reflect the federal House—there's an important principle there that we still don't accept: This idea that somehow having the same number of provincial seats as there are federal seats is better democracy is one that we reject. It's based on the fact that it's 103 in Ontario out of 301 across the country. This 103 is everything. That's all there is, if you will. I have been an alderman and I know that if anybody suggested, "Well, let's just by extrapolation say, why don't we streamline things even further and make municipal wards the size of MPP ridings?" that's not going to serve democracy. A lot of it has to do with the scale.

When you're an alderman, potholes and tree roots in the sewers are important. They may not be earth-shattering but they're important to the people who live there. If you're an alderman or a local councillor, you've got an obligation to deal with that.

I sure wouldn't want to try now, given the kind of territory that I cover or even the territory I had before, to understand those kinds of local needs. Given the number of school boards that are now within each of our ridings, parent councils, community groups, Neighbourhood Watch, it's going to be so difficult for us to provide the same kind of relationship to the communities that make up our ridings that we did in the past. I predict that not too far in the future we will begin to change and go back to slightly smaller ridings, recognizing that ultimately

gives us the kind of democracy that people want and gives them the kind of access they need as MPPs.

The other thing I want to put on the record at this time is that the most significant thing for us—and this is where we got into a lot of difficulty in the negotiations, and I'm not going to name names because that serves no purpose—one perspective at the table was: "Look, there are only nine of you and there's X number of us, so why should you get this and this?"

That argument was repeated over and over and was extremely frustrating for us. It's not the numbers per se that matter. We'd like to have a bigger caucus, for sure, no question about that. But the principle that I took on behalf of our caucus to the negotiating table was that we provide the historic third alternative to the Tories and the Liberals. I don't expect anyone in the other two parties to agree with this, but we make the case that in far too many instances there's really not a lot of difference between the Liberals and the Tories, and that the people of Ontario deserve—now we're getting into the kind of debate I'm used to: We provide an alternative that's different. If this were a regular debate I'd be arguing better, but I'm not going that far till after the vote, OK?

That was the important principle, that once you crossed the threshold of party status, you then had an obligation to have a position and respond to environmental issues, labour issues, health issues, social service, all the things that provincial government provides. That obligation is not decided based on whether you have 8, 9, 12, 15 or 30 members.

Providing that legitimate third choice, the second alternative from the government, requires a certain infrastructure. First of all, you've got to be in question period. You've got to be in the game in order to be offering the kind of constructive criticism that opposition does and also offering your alternative. If you're sitting quietly during all of question period, the reality is that it's not happening. You really aren't participating as a full partner in this House. We know for decades that has been the experience. As I read into the record earlier, there are experts who have said that we have the only real, true, stable three-party system in this place.

It was important for us in the NDP, on every issue we debated, to maintain enough presence, enough resources, enough opportunity to make a difference in some of the voting procedures, that we were offering a legitimate, full-fledged, fully researched, fully credible third choice to the other two traditional parties that make up this place.

I'm pleased that at the end of the day we were able to overcome the differences on that point of view. There are things we would have liked to have in here that aren't, there are some things in here that we like less than others, but I have no hesitancy in saying that I think it's a fair agreement. I think it provides the kind of traditional Ontario Legislature that Ontarians have expected and expected to see as a result of the June 3 election.

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I want to also say on at least one point that there is something new and innovative here. It came at a price, but it's new, it's innovative, and I want to make sure that if it works, the government House leader, Norm Sterling, gets all the credit. Conversely, if it bombs, Norm, you're going to wear it.

I won't go into the detail of it because we don't want to take up too much time today, but I think it's important because it's not often that we see—I see—things coming across from the government that are new and that enhance democracy. I realize that can be an explosive point, but that's my opinion. In this case, though, what we see is a change to the committee system where in two of our committees now individual members of those committees can generate bills that at least will get the time of day in committee. If they get the support of five members on that committee—it doesn't matter which party, and no one party can control that—the issue has to come to the House and there has to be at least a debate on it.

This is a good thing. I hope we pay a lot of attention to it and I hope we analyze it carefully, because if it works, maybe we can build on it in the future as a way of putting real meaning to what we all say, which is that backbenchers in the government and in the oppositions have to play a bigger role. Everybody makes that speech and nothing changes. This is a change that has some real potential.

When it was first introduced, I really had some concerns about it because we didn't have the mechanism for the vote spelled out, but I want to give House leader Sterling all the credit in the world for backing up his words with a process that said yes, he's trying to provide people with a new role, a more effective role. If that means down the road that backbenchers come to play a more important role in this place, then I think the source of that ought to be recognized. It was from the government House leader, who had no real gain to put it on the table other than as something he's personally felt strongly about. I want to acknowledge it and give him credit for having the courage to put it on the table and to give individual members some opportunity to play a bigger role than we have in the past.

With that, Speaker, I will conclude my remarks except to say to all the members of the House, to tell you straight up, that I don't think we've gotten anything that quite frankly the third party didn't deserve at the end of the day, because had there been a change in the math formula in the original bill that reduced the number of seats, we wouldn't have had these negotiations. Having said that, there was nothing that absolutely guaranteed or ordained that we would get party status. As much as I feel we deserve it, there was nothing to guarantee that. I want to thank all the members of the Tory party and the Liberal Party who put their support behind this to give us the opportunity to continue to play the important historical role that we have in Ontario and at least provide some glimmer of light that indeed democracy is alive and well in Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Bradley: I want to say right off the top that I believe the NDP should be extended party status. During the election campaign and after the election we've had some tough contests between us, between the various political parties, but I've always believed that each of the political parties after the election should have been recognized as political parties. Each has an important role to play in a democracy and each of us has a different approach to politics. It varies from time to time. Sometimes if we're in government, tough decisions have to be made that don't always reflect what we feel we would like to do, but there we are.

I want to say that I think the House is enhanced by the fact that we have three political parties that are recognized in this House and that we have members of all political parties who are able to make a contribution to this House. I believe that's as it should be. I suspect that all of us, right after the election, knew that would be the case, but I want to say that I most assuredly believe that.

I also want to say that it is more of a challenge for us with larger ridings today, and to meet those challenges some provisions have been made in the discussions between the three House leaders which will be helpful. I know particularly the northern members—I represent north St Catharines, so I don't know if I'm eligible for this, but some of the northern members particularly have a long way to travel. I can get through my riding in three minutes. I better amend that, because that would be breaking the speed limit. In four minutes I can drive from one side of my riding to the other along the Queen Elizabeth highway if it isn't tied up with an accident. It would take some members in the north a couple of days sometimes to travel because they don't even have roads or railroads and they have to fly into some places. So I think the provisions that are made for those folks are excellent.

I do want to say, if I may sound partisan for a moment—the government House leader would be disappointed if I were not—that I think you really put the boots to the Ombudsman and the Environmental Commissioner, both of whom were critical of this government. I thought the reappointment of both would have been in line, but obviously the government does not agree with me on this.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-East York): It's such a rare occasion in this House when there is such unanimity and good spirit that I had to stand up. I just wanted to be part of it.

I say in response to our House leader's comments that he was very gracious in the tribute he paid to the others who were involved in the negotiations, and of course we are pleased with the result that has been arrived at. I did want to make the point, however, that I think the issue of party status is not one of largesse on the part of the other parties. I believe, with the reduction in the number of seats in the House, it was due and expected. I also want to make the point that the new number, at eight, is still the highest percentage of any Legislative Assembly in the country. The average is 4.9%, which would turn out

to be a caucus of five members in this Legislature, and we have the number at eight. This is just to make the point that this is something that I think is the right thing to do, and I applaud that it is being done.

I want to close my remarks echoing the minister responsible for seniors' issues from question period today. When she was responding to a question from one of her back-bench members, she said that she wanted to acknowledge that there were seven new members on that side and she wanted to say how pleased they were that there were seven new members and how pleased they were to have each and every one of them. Well, let me say there are nine returning—I almost said "old"—members. I can't tell you how pleased we are to have each and every one of them, and we wish them all a very long and very healthy term of office in this Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Further questions and comments? Further debate?

Mr Sterling has moved second reading of Bill 4. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Hon Mr Sterling: Mr Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to move third reading of the Legislative Assembly Statute Law Amendment Act.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 1999

LOI DE 1999 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI A TRAIT À L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE

Mr Sterling moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 4, An Act respecting the Legislative Assembly and its officers / Projet de loi 4, Loi concernant l'Assemblée législative et ses fonctionnaires.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

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GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

STANDING ORDERS REFORM

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Government House Leader): Mr Speaker, I believe I have unanimous consent to move the following motion without notice regarding the standing orders and that the debate time remaining on the clock this afternoon be divided equally among the three parties.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Agreed? Agreed.

Interjection: Dispense

Hon Mr Sterling: I wish I could. This is going to be rather long because it includes a number of changes to our standing orders.

I move that the standing orders of the Legislative Assembly be amended as follows:

That standing order 1(d) be struck out.

That standing order 2 be struck out and the following substituted:

"2. For the purpose of these standing orders, 'recognized party' means a party caucus of eight or more members of the Legislative Assembly.

"Routine motion" means any motion, including motions under standing order 9, made for the purpose of fixing the days or times of the meetings or adjournments of the House, or its committees; establishing or revising the membership of committees, and the meeting schedule thereof; arranging the proceedings of the House; or any other motion relating strictly to the technical procedure of the House or its committees and the management of the business thereof.

"Substantive motion" means a motion that is not incidental or supplementary to any other business of the House, but is a self-contained proposal capable of expressing a decision of the House. Examples of such motions are: the motion for an address in reply to the speech from the throne, the budget motion, want of confidence motions on allotted days, resolutions and motions for returns or addresses;

"Sitting day" means any day on which the House meets.

"Sessional day" means a meeting of the House held pursuant to standing orders 8(a), 9(c)(iii) or 10(a); or an evening meeting of the House held pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i) or (ii).

That standing order 4(c) be struck out and the following substituted:

"(c) At the commencement of every Parliament, or from time to time as may be required, the House shall appoint two Deputy Chairs of the committee of the whole House, to be known respectively as the First and Second Chair of the committee of the whole House, either of whom shall, in order of precedence, whenever the Chair of the committee of the whole House is absent or otherwise unable to act, be entitled to exercise all the powers vested in the Chair of the committee of the whole House including those powers as Deputy Speaker."

That standing order 9 be struck out and the following substituted:

"9.(a) Except as provided in clause (c)(iii), and in standing order 37, at 6 pm on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, the Speaker shall adjourn the House without motion until the next sessional day.

"(b) Except as provided in standing order 95(e), at 12 noon on any day on which the House meets in the morning, the Speaker shall leave the chair until 1:30 pm.

"(c) Upon passage of a government motion, the House shall meet, as the case may be,

"(i) Between the hours of 6:45 pm and 9:30 pm, notice of which must appear on the Orders and Notices paper by the first sitting day of the first week to which the motion applies, or

"(ii) Between 6:45 pm and another specified time not later than midnight, notice of which must appear on the Orders and Notices paper by the second sitting day of the week immediately preceding the first week to which the motion applies, or

"(iii) Past the adjournment time set out in clause (a) and continuing to a specified time not later than midnight, notice of which must appear on the Orders and Notices paper by the second sitting day of the week immediately preceding the first week to which the motion applies.

"Such a motion may apply to one day or to more than one day and, in the latter case, shall specify whether clauses (i), (ii) or (iii) apply to different days. The question on such a motion shall be put forthwith and without amendment or debate. If a recorded vote is requested by five members, the division bell shall be limited to five minutes.

"Evening meetings held under clauses (i) or (ii) shall be limited to the consideration of government orders or private members' public business or both, according to the terms of the motion, but no government bill shall be called on more than one sessional day during a single sitting day without unanimous consent. At the adjournment time specified for the day or days in the motion, the Speaker shall adjourn the House without motion until the next sessional day.

"(d) Where a motion under clause (c) provides that all or part of an evening meeting shall be devoted to the consideration of private members' public business, the motion shall indicate the business to be considered, the time or times reserved for such business, and any special procedure to be followed. Such motion may provide that all or part of standing order 95 applies with necessary modifications to the debate on private members' public business.

"(e) When the House adjourns, the members shall keep their seats until the Speaker has left the chamber."

That standing order 10 be amended by adding the following clause:

"(a.1) The Speaker shall have the authority to vary the time of any recall made under this standing order to such extent as is, in his or her opinion, necessary to ensure that reasonable notice of the recall is conveyed to each member and to permit all other arrangements to be made for the House to meet. However, no variance may be made if the time specified in the notice of recall for the House to meet is at least 24 hours later than the time the Speaker receives the notice."

That standing order 10(b) be struck out.

That standing order 11(a) be amended by striking out the number "20" in the first line and substituting the number "12".

That standing order 11(b) be struck out and the following substituted:

"(b) If at any time after prayers, the Speaker's attention is directed to the apparent lack of a quorum, the Speaker shall, upon determining that a quorum is not present, cause the bells to be rung until a quorum is pres-

ent and, in any case, for no longer than five minutes. If a quorum is not present after the expiration of five minutes, the Speaker shall adjourn the House without question put until the next sessional day. The matter under consideration prior to the adjournment is deemed to be adjourned to a future sessional day."

That standing order 14 be struck out and the following substituted:

"14. Whenever the Speaker is of the opinion that a motion offered to the House is contrary to the rules and privileges of Parliament, the Speaker shall rule it out of order, and may quote the rule or authority applicable."

That standing order 15(d) be struck out.

That standing order 16 be amended by striking out all of the words between "may" in the second line and "adjourn" in the fourth line.

That standing order 24(a) be amended by striking out the words "of a committee" in the second line and the words "or committee" in the third line.

That standing order 24(b) be amended by adding the following:

"At any time during a debate limited by this clause, a member then speaking may divide his or her time among a member or members of his or her party. Such speeches shall be given consecutively without rotation among the parties and shall be deemed to be a single speech for the purposes of standing order 25."

That standing order 24(d) be struck out.

That standing order 25 be struck out and the following substituted:

"25. Following the speech of each member, up to four members may ask questions and comment for up to two minutes each on matters relevant to the matters before the House, and the member originally speaking may reply for up to two minutes, in the following circumstances:

"(i) debate on second reading of a government bill, but no such questions and comments shall be allowed following the reply allowed to the minister or parliamentary assistant who has moved second reading of the bill;

"(ii) debate on third reading of a government bill, but no such questions and comments shall be allowed following the reply allowed to the minister or parliamentary assistant who has moved third reading of the bill;

"(iii) debate on the address in reply to the speech from the throne, but no such questions and comments shall be allowed following the speeches of the mover and the seconder of the motion for the address; the speeches of the members speaking first on behalf of the official opposition and the other recognized opposition parties, and the speeches of the members winding up the throne debate for each recognized party;

"(iv) debate on the budget motion, but no such questions and comments shall be allowed following the presentation of the budget by the Minister of Finance, the speeches of the members speaking first on behalf of the official opposition and the other recognized opposition parties, and the speeches of the members winding up the budget debate for each recognized party; and

"(v) debate on a motion for interim supply."

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That standing order 28 be amended by striking out clause (h) and substituting the following:

"(h) Except in the case of any division arising out of any routine proceeding, or where a standing order or other order specifies the time of the vote, a vote may be deferred at the request of any chief whip of a recognized party in the House. The Speaker shall then defer the taking of the vote to the next sessional day during the routine proceeding 'Deferred Votes,' at which time the bells shall be rung for five minutes."

That standing order 28(j) be struck out.

That standing order 30(b) be amended by adding at the end thereof the words "However, routine proceedings shall continue past 4 pm to permit the Speaker to put every question on the deferred votes."

That standing order 31(b) be struck out and the following substituted:

"(b) Up to nine members of recognized parties in the House may make a statement during the period for 'Members' Statements' and the statements shall be allocated in proportion to the number of private members of each of the recognized parties in the House."

That standing order 31(c) be struck out.

That standing order 32(c) be amended by striking out the words "then shall adjourn the debate" in the fourth and fifth lines and substituting the words "notwithstanding standing order 45(a), shall then move adjournment of the debate."

That standing order 33(c) be struck out and the following substituted:

"(c) On the introduction of a government bill, a compendium of background information shall be delivered to the critics of the recognized opposition parties. If it is an amending bill, an up-to-date consolidation of the act or acts to be amended shall also be delivered unless the bill amends an act amended previously in the session."

That standing order 34 be amended by striking out the words following the word "motions" in the second line and substituting the words "as set out in the definition thereof in standing order 2. Except as provided by standing order 9 and 105, these routine motions do not require notice."

That standing order 35(c) be amended by striking out the words "opposition party leaders" and substituting the words "the leaders of recognized opposition parties."

That standing order 36(b) be struck out.

That standing orders 37(a) and (b) be struck out and the following substituted:

"37(a) The Speaker's rulings relating to oral questions are not debatable or subject to appeal. However, a member who is not satisfied with the response to an oral question, or who has been told that his or her question is not urgent or of public importance, may give notice orally at the end of the oral question period that he or she intends to raise the subject matter of the question on the adjournment of the House and must give written notice to the Speaker and file reasons for dissatisfaction with the Clerk before 4:30 pm, and the Speaker shall, not later

than 5 pm, indicate the matter or matters to be raised at the time of adjournment that day.

"(b) Where notice has been given and reasons filed, as provided in clause (a), at 6 pm on any Tuesday or Thursday, the Speaker may deem that a motion to adjourn the House has been made, whereupon the matter in question may be debated for not more than 10 minutes, five minutes to be allowed to the member raising the matter and five minutes to the minister or to his or her parliamentary assistant to reply if he or she so wishes. No more than three such matters of which notice has been given and reasons filed shall be debated on any single sitting day. At the conclusion of such debate or debates the Speaker shall deem the motion to adjourn to be carried and shall adjourn the House to the next sessional day."

That standing order 37(e) be struck out.

That standing order 37(f) be struck out and the following substituted:

"When the House continues to meet past 6 pm on a government motion as provided in standing order 9(c)(iii) the adjournment proceeding under this standing order shall not apply."

That standing order 37(g) be amended by replacing the time "6:30" in the first line with the time "6:45" and by replacing the time "6:25" in the third line with the time "6:30."

That standing order 38 be amended by adding the following clause:

"(b.1) No member may seek to present a petition unless it has previously been given to the Clerk of the assembly who has examined it and certified that it is correct as to form and content."

That is known as the Jim Bradley standing order amendment.

That clause 38(c) be amended by adding the words "In order to be certified by the Clerk," immediately before the word "every" in the first line.

That standing order 38(h) be struck out and the following substituted:

"(h) Within 24 sitting days of its presentation, the government shall file a response to a petition with the Clerk of the House and shall provide a copy of the response to the member who presented the petition."

That standing order 39(b) be amended by striking out the words "opposition critics" in the third line and substituting the words "critics of the recognized opposition parties."

That standing order 42(c) be amended by striking out the word "sessional" in the first line and substituting the word "sitting."

That standing order 42(g) be amended by replacing the time "6" in the second line with the time "5:50" and the number "five" in the fourth line with the number "10."

That standing order 42(l)(ii) be amended by striking out the word "sessional" in the first line and substituting the word "sitting," and by adding at the end thereof the words "and during any extension thereof."

That standing order 43(a) be amended by deleting the words "third party" in the third line and substituting the

words "recognized party having the third largest membership in the House."

That standing order 43(b) be struck out and the following substituted:

"(b) Debate on a motion under clause (a) shall be at a time allotted by agreement of the House leaders of the recognized parties and restricted to one sessional day. The time available shall be apportioned equally among the recognized parties in the House. At 5:50 pm on that day, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and put the question without further debate."

That standing order 43(c) be amended by replacing the number "five" in the second line with the number "10."

That standing order 44(b) be amended by adding the word "recognized" immediately before the word "parties" in the second line.

That standing order 45 be amended by adding the following new clause:

"(a.1) When a motion to adjourn the House is carried, the matter under consideration prior to the adjournment is deemed to be adjourned to a future sessional day."

That standing order 45(d) be struck out.

That standing order 46(a) be amended by striking out the words "or any minister of the crown" in the first and second lines.

That standing order 46 be amended by adding the following new clause:

"(a.1) The time available for debate on a time allocation motion shall be apportioned equally among the recognized parties."

That Standing order 46(b) be amended by replacing the time "6" in the first line with the time "5:50," the time "9:15" in the first line with the time "9:20" and the number "five" in the last line with the number "10."

That standing order 46(e) be struck out.

That standing order 48(a) be struck out.

That standing order 57(a) be amended by adding the following words at the end thereof, "Following the budget speech, if requested by the Minister of Finance, the House shall revert to "Introduction of Bills" for the purpose of allowing the Minister of Finance to move the introduction of any bill or bills arising from the budget."

That standing order 57(b) be amended by replacing the time "5:45" in the second line with the time "5:50," the time "9:15" in the third line with the time "9:20" and the number "15" in the last line with the number "10."

That standing order 58 be struck out and the following substituted:

"58. When a budget has been presented, the main estimates shall be tabled in the House no more than 12 sitting days later. During those 12 days the budget debate shall be completed. If no budget has been presented by the first sitting day following Victoria Day, the main estimates shall be tabled at the next available sitting day. Upon tabling, the estimates shall be deemed to be referred to the standing committee on estimates."

That standing order 59(d) be amended by adding the word "recognized" before the word "party" in the fourth line.

That standing order 59(e) be amended by adding the words "including a procedural motion," following the word "matter" in the second line.

That standing order 62 be amended by adding the following clause:

"(b.1) In the event that any supplementary estimates are not presented to the House until the third Thursday in November, or thereafter, then those supplementary estimates shall be deemed to be referred to the standing committee on estimates as they are presented to the House, shall be deemed to be passed by the committee and shall be deemed to be reported to and received by the House."

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That standing order 62(c) be amended by replacing the time "5:45" in the third line with the time "5:50," the time "9:15" in the third line with the time "9:20" and the number "15" in the 14th line with the number "10" and by striking out the words "subject to the usual standing orders" in the last line and substituting "and the Speaker shall apportion the time equally among the recognized parties in the House."

That the following new standing order be added:

"62.1 Adoption of orders for concurrence shall constitute an order to bring in a supply bill founded on the resolutions contained therein, and founded on the resolutions contained in the deemed concurrences made pursuant to standing orders 60 and 61. Debate under this standing order shall be apportioned equally among the recognized parties. At 5:50 pm or 9:20 pm, as the case may be, on the sessional day during which debate on the second reading stage of the supply bill commences as the first government order of the day, or after three hours of debate if the debate did not commence as the first government order of the day, the Speaker shall without further debate or amendment put all questions necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill. A supply bill given second reading shall be ordered for third reading, and the order for third reading shall then immediately be called and the Speaker shall put the question forthwith without further debate or amendment, no deferral under standing order 28(h) being permitted. In the case of any division under this standing order, the division bell shall be limited to 10 minutes."

That the following new standing order be added:

"65(a.1) The time available for debate on an interim supply motion shall be apportioned equally among the recognized parties."

That standing order 65(b) be amended by replacing the time "5:45" in the second line with the time "5:50," the time "9:15" in the second line with the time "9:20" and the number "15" in the last line with the number "10."

That standing order 68(b) be amended by striking out the word "sessional" in the second, fifth and sixth lines and substituting in both cases the word "sitting."

That standing order 68(c) be amended by striking out the word "sessional" in the second line and substituting the word "sitting."

That standing order 68(d) be amended by adding the words "including a procedural motion," following the word "matter" in the second line.

That standing order 71(a) be struck out and the following substituted:

"(a) At any time before the commencement of second reading debate on a public bill, during "motions," the government House leader may move the following motion, no debate or amendment being permitted, 'That the order for second reading of bill [insert bill title] be discharged and the bill be referred to the standing committee on [insert committee name].'

"(a.1) Notwithstanding standing order 76(a) a bill referred under this standing order, when reported from the committee, shall be ordered for second reading."

That standing order 71(c) be amended by striking out the number "12" in the fourth line and substituting the number "eight."

That standing order 73 be amended by striking out the words "five calendar days" and substituting the words "the fifth calendar day."

That standing order 74(a) be amended by adding the word "recognized" immediately before the word "parties" in the last line.

That standing order 74(b) be struck out.

That standing order 74(c) be struck out and the following substituted:

"(c) The chair of a committee, including the Chair of the Committee of the whole House, may take such reasonable steps as he or she considers necessary to facilitate the committee's consideration and disposition of multiple amendments."

That standing order 82 be amended by striking out the word "Revenue" in the fourth line and substituting the word "Finance."

That standing order 94 be amended by striking out the first full paragraph of the "Public Notice" and substituting the following:

"The rules of procedure and the fees and costs related to applications for private bills are set out in the standing orders of the Legislative Assembly. Copies of the standing orders, and the guide 'Procedures for Applying for Private Legislation,' may be obtained from the Legislative Assembly's Internet site at <http://www.ontla.on.ca> or from:"

That Standing Order 95(g) be struck out and the following substituted:

"(g) To be considered in private members' time the order for second reading or notice of a motion must appear on the Orders and Notices paper two weeks in advance of the day that is determined by the ballot conducted under clause (d)."

That standing orders 96(d) and (e) be struck out and the following substituted:

"(d) The minister shall answer such written questions within 24 sitting days, unless he or she indicates that more time is required because the answer will be costly or time-consuming or that he or she declines to answer, in which case a notation shall be made on the Orders and

Notices paper following the question indicating that the minister has made an interim answer, the approximate date that the information will be available, or that the minister has declined to answer, as the case may be.

"(e) The answers to such written questions shall be given to the member who asked the question and to the Clerk of the House who shall print a notation in the Votes and Proceedings that the question has been answered."

That Standing Order 98 be amended by adding the following thereto:

"Unless expressly provided by the standing orders or by unanimous consent, no member shall speak for more than 20 minutes at a time in committee of the whole House."

That standing order 105 be amended by striking out the words "each session in" in the second line; inserting the words "on motion with notice" following the word "appointed" in the third line; and striking out the word "session" in the last line and substituting the word "Parliament."

That standing orders 105(a), (b), (c) and (d) be struck out and the following substituted:

"(a) Standing committee on justice and social policy;"

"(b) Standing committee on general government."

That standing order 105(h) be struck out.

That standing order 105(i) be amended by adding at the end the following:

"and to be the committee which is empowered to review and consider from time to time the reports of the Ombudsman as they become available; and, as the committee deems necessary, pursuant to section 15(1) of the Ombudsman Act, to formulate general rules for the guidance of the Ombudsman in the exercise of his or her functions under the act; and, to report thereon to the Legislature and to make such recommendations as the committee deems appropriate;"

That the following new standing order be added:

"105.1 In any standing or select committee, the standing orders of the House shall be observed so far as may be applicable, except the standing orders limiting the number of times of speaking. Unless expressly provided by the standing orders or by unanimous consent, no member shall speak for more than 20 minutes at a time in any standing or select committee."

That standing order 107(a) be amended by striking out the words "(a), (b), (c) and (d)" in the first and second lines, and replacing them with the words "(a) and (b)."

That standing order 107(b) be struck out and the following substituted:

"(b) At the beginning of each Parliament and, if necessary, during the course of a Parliament, the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly shall prescribe the ministries and offices assigned to the standing committees for the purposes of this standing order and shall make a report thereon to the House, which report shall be deemed to be adopted."

That standing order 109 be struck out and the following substituted:

"109(a) No standing or select committee shall consist of more than nine members and the membership of such committees shall be in proportion to the representation of the recognized parties in the House.

"(b) Notwithstanding clause (a), each independent member shall, at his or her request, be appointed to at least one standing committee. An independent member may state his or her committee preference to the House leaders but such statement of preference is not binding. Unless the House decides otherwise, no standing committee shall include more than one independent member.

"(c) The appointment of an independent member to a standing committee shall be in addition to the members of recognized parties referred to in clause (a). A recognized party with a majority of seats in the House is entitled to an additional member of the committee for each independent member appointed to the committee.

"(d) Any member appointed to a standing or select committee may, at any time afterwards, be discharged by order of the House from attending the committee and another member appointed.

"(e) A temporary substitution in the membership of a standing or select committee may be made provided a notification thereof, signed by the member acting as the whip of a recognized party, is filed with the clerk of the committee either before or within 30 minutes of a committee meeting being called to order."

That standing order 111 be amended by striking out the word "sessional" in the first line and substituting the word "sitting."

That standing order 112 be struck out and the following substituted:

"112. At the commencement of every Parliament, or from time to time as may be required, each standing committee shall elect a Chair and Vice-Chair."

That standing order 114 be amended by striking out the word "sessional" in the fourth line and substituting the word "sitting."

That standing order 116(c) be struck out and the following substituted:

"(c) If at any time during a meeting of a standing or select committee the Chair's attention is directed to the apparent lack of quorum, the Chair shall, upon determining that a quorum is not present, suspend the proceedings of the committee; if no quorum is present at the expiration of 10 minutes, the Chair shall adjourn the committee to the next scheduled meeting of the committee."

That standing orders 117 and 118 be struck out.

That standing orders 121(a) and (b) be struck out and the following substituted:

"121.(a) At the beginning of each fiscal year or as soon as possible thereafter, the Clerk of the House shall prepare a budget for presentation to the Board of Internal Economy for its approval in whole or in part. The budget shall set forth in reasonable detail estimates of proposed expenditures of standing and select committees for the fiscal year.

"(b) When the expenditures of any committee have reached the limits set forth in any such budget, the Chair of the committee shall present to the Board of Internal Economy, for its approval in whole or in part, a supplementary budget or budgets."

That standing order 124 be struck out and the following substituted:

"124(a) Once in each session, for consideration in that session, each member of a committee set out in standing order 105(a) or (b) may propose that the committee study and report on a matter or matters relating to the mandate, management, organization or operation of the ministries and offices which are assigned to the committee, as well as the agencies, boards and commissions reporting to such ministries and offices.

"(b) Notice of a motion by a member under this standing order shall be filed with the clerk of the committee not less than 24 hours before the member intends to move it in a meeting of the committee. The clerk of the committee shall distribute a copy of the motion to the members of the committee as soon as it is received. Whenever a motion under this standing order is being considered in a committee, discussion of the motion shall not exceed 30 minutes, at the expiry of which the Chair shall put every question necessary to dispose of the motion and any amendments thereto.

"(c) The proposal of a member for study and report must be adopted by at least two-thirds of the members of the committee, excluding the Chair. Such study in the committee shall not take precedence over consideration of a government public bill.

"(d) Following its consideration of such a matter, the committee may present a substantive report to the House and may adopt the text of a draft bill on the subject matter. Where the text of a draft bill is adopted by the committee, it shall be an instruction to the Chair to introduce such bill in his or her name as primary sponsors. The other committee members who support the bill may have their names printed on the face of the bill as the secondary sponsors.

"(e) There shall be not less than one sessional day, or three hours, of debate in the House on such a bill, to take place at a time or times allotted by agreement of the House leaders of the recognized parties."

That standing order 129(c) be struck out and the following substituted:

"(c) Every member of the committee, other than the Chair, shall be permitted to indicate that he or she dissents from a particular recommendation or comment. The committee shall permit a member to express the reasons for such dissent in an appendix to the report."

That standing order 129 be amended by adding the following new clause:

"(c.1) The Chair of a committee may establish a reasonable deadline for filing any dissenting opinion with the clerk of the committee."

That standing order 133 be amended by adding the following new clause:

"(a.1) To certify whether petitions proposed to be presented by members are correct as to form and content.

That standing order 134(a) be amended by striking out the word "sessional" in the second line and substituting the word "sitting."

That standing order 137(e) be struck out and the following substituted:

"(e) Provide assistance to standing or select committees considering bills.

And that the Clerk of the House be authorized to make such consequential changes in the standing orders, including renumbering as may be required as a result of the amendments made herein.

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I missed a couple of words and I wonder if you could repeat it again.

The Speaker: That's not a point of order.

Just a clarification from the government House leader: On section 71(a) you said "charged." The copy of the motion says "discharged."

Hon Mr Sterling: I'm sure it's "discharged." I just wanted to see if you were awake, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: I was listening very carefully. In 74(a) you read "after" instead of "before," which is in the table copy.

Hon Mr Sterling: It's obviously "before."

The Speaker: Finally, in 107(a) you omitted to indicate standing order 107(a).

Hon Mr Sterling: I did intend to include 107(a).

The Speaker: Thank you. Mr Sterling has moved that the standing orders of the Legislative Assembly—

Interjection: Dispense.

The Speaker: Dispense? Agreed. Debate? Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

It almost being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 6:30 of the clock this evening.

The House recessed from 1758 to 1830.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneure: Hon / L'hon Hilary M. Weston

Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Gary Carr

Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers

Clerk Assistant / Greffière adjointe: Deborah Deller

Clerks at the Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergeant d'armes: Dennis Clark

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Barrie-Simcoe-Brampton	Tascona, Joseph N. (PC)	Hamilton East / -Est	Agostino, Dominic (L)
Beaches-East York	Larkin, Frances (ND)	Hamilton Mountain	Bountrogianni, Marie (L)
Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale	Gill, Raminder (PC)	Hamilton West / -Ouest	Christopherson, David (ND)
Brampton Centre / -Centre	Spina, Joseph (PC)	Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington	Dombrowsky, Leona (L)
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Brant	Levac, Dave (L)	Kenora-Rainy River	Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Broadview-Greenwood	Churley, Marilyn (ND)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Gerretsen, John (L)
Bruce-Grey	Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Kitchener Centre / -Centre	Wettlaufer, Wayne (PC)
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Carleton-Gloucester	Coburn, Brian (PC)	Lanark-Carleton	Runciman, Hon / L'hon Robert W. (PC) Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations / ministre de la Consommation et du Commerce
Chatham-Kent Essex	Hoy, Pat (L)	Leeds-Grenville	Cunningham, Hon / L'hon Dianne (PC) Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
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Don Valley West / -Ouest	Turnbull, Hon / L'hon David (PC) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports	London-Fanshawe	Tsubouchi, Hon / L'hon David H. (PC) Solicitor General / solliciteur général
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Eglinton-Lawrence	Colle, Mike (L)	Mississauga East / -Est	Marland, Hon / L'hon Margaret (PC) Minister without Portfolio (Children) / ministre sans portefeuille (Enfance)
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Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Kells, Morley (PC)		
Glengarry-Prescott-Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)		
Guelph-Wellington	Elliott, Brenda (PC)		
Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant	Barrett, Toby (PC)		
Haliburton-Victoria-Brock	Hodgson, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC) Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / président du Conseil de gestion		

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
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Niagara Centre / -Centre	Kormos, Peter (ND)	Scarborough Southwest / -Sud-Ouest	Newman, Dan (PC)
Niagara Falls	Maves, Bart (PC)	Scarborough-Agincourt	Phillips, Gerry (L)
Nickel Belt	Martel, Shelley (ND)	Scarborough-Rouge River	Curling, Alvin (L)
Nipissing	Harris, Hon / L'hon Michael D. (PC) Premier and President of the Executive Council / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif	Simcoe North / -Nord	Dunlop, Garfield (PC)
Northumberland	Galt, Doug (PC)	Simcoe-Grey	Wilson, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Minister of Energy, Science and Technology / ministre de l'Énergie, des Sciences et de la Technologie
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Oakville	Carr, Hon / L'hon Gary (PC) Speaker / Président	St Paul's	Bryant, Michael (L)
Oshawa	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Stoney Creek	Clark, Brad (PC)
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Prince Edward-Hastings	Parsons, Ernie (L)	Waterloo-Wellington	Arnott, Ted (PC)
Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	Conway, Sean G. (L)	Wentworth-Burlington	Skarica, Toni (PC)
Sarnia-Lambton	Di Cocco, Caroline (L)	Whitby-Ajax	Flaherty, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC)
Sault Ste Marie	Martin, Tony (ND)		Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
			Young, David (PC)
			Pupatello, Sandra (L)
		Willowdale	Duncan, Dwight (L)
		Windsor West / -Ouest	Kwinter, Monte (L)
		Windsor-St Clair	Munro, Julia (PC)
		York Centre / -Centre	Cordiano, Joseph (L)
		York North / -Nord	Sergio, Mario (L)
		York South-Weston / York-Sud-Weston	
		York West / -Ouest	

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Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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of Ontario

First Session, 37th Parliament

Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario

Première session, 37^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Wednesday 27 October 1999

Mercredi 27 octobre 1999



Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 27 October 1999

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 27 octobre 1999

The House met at 1830.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

AMENDMENTS BECAUSE OF THE SUPREME COURT OF CANADA DECISION IN M. v. H. ACT, 1999

LOI DE 1999 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN RAISON DE LA DÉCISION DE LA COUR SUPRÈME DU CANADA DANS L'ARRÊT M. c. H.

Mr Flaherty moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 5, An Act to amend certain statutes because of the Supreme Court of Canada decision in M. v. H. / Projet de loi 5, Loi modifiant certaines lois en raison de la décision de la Cour suprême du Canada dans l'arrêt M. c. H.

Hon Jim Flaherty (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): This bill responds to the Supreme Court of Canada decision while preserving the traditional values of the family by protecting the definition of "spouse" in Ontario law. This legislation is not part of our Blueprint agenda. We are introducing this bill because of the Supreme Court of Canada decision.

By way of context, in May of this year the Supreme Court of Canada rendered its decision in a case called M. and H. The Supreme Court found section 29 of Ontario's Family Law Act to be unconstitutional. The Supreme Court of Canada also noted that numerous Ontario provincial statutes include similar provisions to the provision which the court held to be unconstitutional in the M. and H. case.

The court suspended its declaration for six months from May of this year to allow the province of Ontario to address these issues in a comprehensive fashion. A comprehensive response is necessary to protect the constitutionality of many of the public statutes of Ontario. This bill amends 67 public statutes of this province.

The Supreme Court of Canada ruling means that under the Constitution, same-sex partners are entitled to the same rights and responsibilities as common-law couples.

There are three indications from the Supreme Court of Canada that are taken into consideration pursuant to the M. and H. case.

First of all there is, if I may call it so, the equivalency directive, where the court indicated that the law ought to

provide an equivalent set of rights and responsibilities for same-sex partners as for common-law spouses in this province.

Second, there was the timing issue. The court indicated that the matter should be dealt with within six months, which is by November 20, 1999.

Third, the indication was that the approach that could be taken or perhaps ought to be taken by the province was a comprehensive one; and indeed the province has done so. There has been a review of the numerous public statutes of this province in an attempt to be responsive to that indication from the Supreme Court of Canada.

Marriage is not affected by this bill. There are certain unique rights and responsibilities that relate to marriage that are not affected by this bill; for example, the property rights in parts I and II of the Family Law Act, the right to inherit on intestacy in the Succession Law Act, and other rights and responsibilities. It is important for members to be aware of that fundamental in this debate, that marriage is not affected by this bill. Marriage, as members know, involves a man and a woman in Ontario.

We have preserved in the bill the traditional definition of "spouse" and "marital status." Both "spouse" in part III of the Family Law Act and "marital status" in the Ontario Human Rights Code, as defined now, refer to a man and a woman, and that remains.

Conceptually, the bill creates throughout the Ontario public statutes the rights and responsibilities for same-sex partners. As members have gone through the bill, I'm sure they've noticed that that is repeated throughout the amendments. It is certainly important and I think helpful for members to understand that that concept and theme are repeated throughout the bill.

The bill itself can appear somewhat intimidating at first blush because it is rather long, but as I'm attempting to indicate to members, the length of the bill is not indicative of the complexity of the principles involved. In fact, the principles involved are few in number and quite direct. One of those principles is the creation of same-sex partner rights throughout the various items of statute law that are referred to in the bill.

Another important point is, pursuant to the ruling of the Supreme Court of Canada, the attempt in Bill 5 to create that equivalency of rights and responsibilities between same-sex partners and common-law spouses in Ontario indeed was, as we understand it, the essence of the ruling made by the Supreme Court of Canada in May of this year.

The other principle I've mentioned is the comprehensiveness of the approach. An attempt has been made to use the best skills available to do a thorough analysis of the public statutes of the province of Ontario and to respond appropriately to the ruling of the Supreme Court of Canada with respect to all of those many statutes.

This is not just about rights. This is also about responsibilities. One of the most fundamental rights and responsibilities that the Supreme Court of Canada dealt with in *M. v. H.* was the right of support, which on the other hand is the responsibility of paying support. That is dealt with in part III of the Family Law Act. It is a right that accrues to common-law spouses in Ontario and therefore, pursuant to the decision of the Supreme Court of Canada, if this bill is passed in the wisdom of this Legislative Assembly, then those rights and responsibilities with respect to support, which are significant rights, would also accrue to same-sex partners in Ontario.

If the bill is passed, same-sex partners would have an obligation to provide financial support when a relationship breaks down just as common-law spouses do now. The courts would hear law proceedings involving same-sex partners.

Same-sex partners would be eligible to receive pension, employment and insurance benefits provided for in several statutes.

As I mentioned a moment ago, the Human Rights Code would prohibit discrimination on the basis of same-sex partner status in employment, accommodation and other areas, as set out in the Ontario Human Rights Code.

Some of the responsibilities that go with the amendments proposed in the bill relate to the corporations and being at arm's length. These provisions have applied to common-law spouses and therefore they are proposed to be extended, if the bill is passed, to same-sex partners. For example, a person's same-sex partner would be considered an associate, restricted party or have a deemed interest for the purposes of conflict-of-interest provisions. These rules apply in such areas as insider trading, appointments to positions and disclosure of financial interests by public officials.

Some tax benefits and liabilities would cover same-sex partners. A person would be responsible for maintenance of his or her same-sex partner in the care of a mental health institution. Same-sex partners of convicted or accused persons would not be permitted to receive payment for interviews, appearances or recollections regarding the crime. A person could be appointed the administrator of the estate of his or her same-sex partner.

These are just some of the examples of rights and responsibilities that this bill would affect, and they are just examples. The bill itself amends 67 statutes of the province.

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Developing such a comprehensive bill has been a complex and painstaking task. I would like to take this opportunity to recognize the staff of my ministry, the Ministry of the Attorney General, who have worked on

this complex and difficult project. They deserve our thanks, in my view, and congratulations for a job well done. They have certainly demonstrated a high degree of professionalism in their work with respect to Bill 5.

I stress that this bill reserves the definition of "spouse" and "marital status" for a man and a woman, the traditional definition of "family" in Ontario. The bill introduces into the law a new term called "same-sex partner," while at the same time protecting the traditional definitions of "spouse" and "marital status."

The rights and obligations that are unique to married couples and are not being extended to same-sex partners in particular are property rights, the rights that relate to the matrimonial home, and the right to inherit on intestacy, for example. The decision of the Supreme Court of Canada and this bill are not about redefining the traditional understanding of family. This bill responds to the Supreme Court ruling while preserving the traditional values of the family in Ontario. This government respects the Constitution. That is why we are introducing this legislation. I remind all members on both sides of the House of the need to meet the November 20 deadline set by the Supreme Court of Canada.

May I also say, by way of concluding remarks, that I've been involved in a substantial number of consultations as Attorney General, with respect to this bill, with many individuals and groups. I've also had many discussions with members of this assembly on both sides of this House with respect to this bill. The consultations have been very helpful in formulating the contents of the bill. In my discussions with the members of this place, I must say that regardless of political party and without exception, those discussions have made it clear that all members have given this bill their thoughtful consideration.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Just to advise you, there has been agreement between the three House leaders that the remaining time will be split evenly between the Liberal caucus and the NDP caucus.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

The member for Toronto Centre-Rosedale.

Applause.

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): The real test will be whether they clap at the end.

It's a great honour for me as a newly elected member of the Legislature to have an opportunity during my maiden speech to talk about an issue that will be perhaps as important to me as any that I speak to in my time as a legislator—however brief, my staff reminded me.

I would like to make mention of the attendance today of some people in the gallery: my mother and stepfather, my sister, my nephew, and many people who have lent their support to me over the course of my brief political career. As well, my staff have been of some great assistance in preparing me for tonight. I'm hard enough to work with at the best of times, so I certainly very much appreciate the efforts that they have made.

I'm a very fortunate person. I stand before you as a privileged person, not just for having the opportunity to serve in this place but because I have many different families. I have the family that I was born into and that I gained by marriage and by birth and I have the family that I have gained as a gay man; people who have joined in so many different ways and from so many different circumstances to lend so much to my life.

I also stand before you as a lucky man because I represent a riding, Toronto Centre-Rosedale, where we find ourselves today, that has had some extraordinarily powerful figures in the history of this place. I would like to make specific mention of one, a gentleman who many members will know, Ian Scott. As the member for St George-St David, he represented this place.

I wanted to start to discuss the bill that is before us tonight with a reference to the debate in this place on November 25, 1986, when legislators stood and debated Bill 7. I read from Hansard:

"It is not a question of giving privileges, extra rights or special status, and it never was. It was always a question of inviting those who provide services to examine whether, on an individual basis, the applicant should be entitled to that service.

"In this country, one can reject a man for a job if he is incompetent but not if he is black. One can reject people for housing if they are noisy or do not pay their bills, but not because they are Jews."

What we say today is that it is now time to take the next step. That is what we are here tonight to do.

I'm lucky as well, indeed privileged, because I represent Toronto Centre-Rosedale. Each of us makes claim to the special nature of our riding, and I know that each of us feels that we represent the most special place in Ontario. I'm here tonight to make a case for Toronto Centre-Rosedale. I'm honoured to represent a place that is so reflective of Ontario, the best characteristics of Ontario, a place that is so diverse, that has some of the richest and some of the poorest, and has people who come from all places in the world and call Ontario and Canada home.

What I am as excited about as anything is that in this first item of business I have an opportunity as a member to participate in and debate, I will be able to move my energy forward and work on other things in my riding, other conditions and concerns which are very important.

We've already started to do the work of driving crack houses from neighbourhoods, to preserve heritage buildings, to help tenants to organize, and through your help, Mr Speaker, I hope to help develop a hockey league to help kids at risk. There are some people here tonight I play hockey with and I was going to comment that I'm a lucky servant of a community, and now of 115,000 people or so who call Toronto Centre-Rosedale home.

On this legislation, where I have an opportunity to stand before you and make remarks, I really need to be very careful, to pay dues to all of those who have done the hard work here. I'm feeling a little bit like the hockey player who gets the setup shot in the slot and has very

little difficulty putting it in the net, although perhaps not when you were a goaltender, Mr Speaker.

The hard work has been done by many people who join us in the galleries today. They were the ones who were in the corner digging out the puck. For anyone who has seen me play hockey, that's a role perhaps I'm better suited to than being able to put the puck in the net. I would like to make sure I pay appropriate tribute to the people who have come before us, the people who have forged new ground. We need to be very clear about this.

Over the course of time, our governments have forced communities to raise money, to put themselves at some great personal expense, not just in terms of finances but in terms of the kind of expense that it takes to challenge a government, to challenge a constitution.

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I won't do this often, but we need to pay tribute to the lawyers who work on a pro bono basis, so often giving freely of their time and their energy to move the issue of equality rights forward. Tonight, I am here in part to pay tribute to them.

There is a wide variety of organizations that have done this over time and they are well represented here tonight. I know it's risky to make mention any time and to start to name people and organizations, but groups like CLGRO, the Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Rights in Ontario, and the Campaign for Equal Families; community leaders like the Reverend Brent Hawkes, who is here tonight; Jamie Watt, who is more familiar to some on your side, who has been a leader in the community through the human rights campaign; and my colleague in government, Kyle Rae, who sits on city council; these are people who have done the hard work that has helped to move the ball of equality forward and, I believe, contributed greatly to making Ontario a better and more equal place.

As gays and lesbians, we carry on often with a slightly larger burden than others, but this bill, Bill 5, signals to the world that Ontario is a place where gays and lesbians have equal rights. Today, we are setting a new place at the table.

I've been in this place before, although recently elected, and the galleries have been important steps along the path in my own evolution as a gay man. In 1986, when the government of the day was debating Bill 7, I sat in that gallery on the east side—I must say, I much preferred the view—and watched the government deal at the end of a very very difficult debate. But at the end of the day, Ontario legislators from all parties—not equally distributed perhaps, but from all parties—supported what was then entrenchment of sexual orientation in the prohibited grounds for discrimination of the Ontario Human Rights Code. I was proud of my government that day.

On June 9, 1994, I stood or sat in that gallery, and I will not go on at length but I must say I don't think that was the proudest day in the history of this place. Today, we have a chance to put that behind us.

I want to turn a little bit to the debate. What is this about? Well, these are not about special rights, these are about equal rights, and having gained them our commu-

nity must now live up to them. I'm so convinced that we will because the indefatigable spirit of gays and lesbians has brought us this far. We're going to need to work very hard in the next little while to communicate the impact of these, because the bill that is before us is comprehensive in nature. The minister was very effective in highlighting just some of the rights and obligations that are involved.

I'm excited as well that our community, having made this progress, can turn some of its attention and energy towards other issues which are so present for us: peer and mentor support for young gays and lesbians who come out in increasing numbers with too little support; care for the ill and disadvantaged who are among us; and to participate in developing housing for those who have come before us and blazed new trails.

Bill 5 propels gays and lesbians towards the promised land that is equality. This bill places a new standard, a higher standard, upon gays and lesbians in their relationships with their same-sex partners.

What enabled it? The minister mentioned the Supreme Court at least once. I would like to pay a bit of tribute to the Canadian Constitution, to Bill Davis and Pierre Trudeau. Let us be very clear: This bill has been made possible because politicians reflecting the values of Canadians patriated the Constitution and provided Canadians with a Charter of Rights and Freedoms. I would like to read just a couple of paragraphs that Bill Davis spoke at that historic time:

"Mr Prime Minister, it is a day that Canadians will remember; it is a day on which I think we can all rejoice. It is not the product of any one person. It is not the product of any group of people. It is the product of men who have a feeling about this nation, who recognize the sensitivities, the delicacies, the diversities, but who in the final analysis have done something that others have not been able to do, to agree at long last that this country will patriate its Constitution. We will have a charter, and we know now how to amend that Constitution. Mr Prime Minister, I thank you."

I would like to pay tribute to the minister opposite. This is not something I hope to have to do too often in this place and, by my nature, probably won't. I must say, earlier in the week I sent the minister a note across the aisle and I thanked him on behalf of a community, at least because the bill is comprehensive in its nature. Most certainly I regret the lengths that you have had to go to to make a difference around nomenclature and to lay responsibility for this legislation at the foot of the Supreme Court. But nevertheless, Mr Minister, I applaud you and the staff in your ministry and those other ministries that have statutes in this bill for the work they have done, given the complexity and the comprehensive nature of this legislation.

Bill 5, the details: What is the impact? I've been asked so often in the days since this bill was introduced, what is the impact? I said, "For me, regrettably, too little." This is my commercial message. I'm regrettably single. Where's that card with the phone number?

This act is An Act to amend certain statutes because of the Supreme Court of Canada decision in *M. v. H.*, or what we've come to refer to on this side as "The devil made me do it" act. On the issue of consultation, Mr Minister, which you mentioned, next time you have a bill this significant coming forward, we'd be very happy to strike a committee, a round table, a task force, an action group, to come up with language which might better capture the significance of this legislation.

I think we've seen a historic evolution in the life of this place and of the politicians who come here. Earlier I mentioned, and I don't plan to go on at length, Bill 167. I mentioned that I don't think it's the finest day in the history of this place. But what we have seen is that people, given more time, more information, can change their minds. As one who seeks to work with people to gain legislative recognition on a variety of initiatives, I say we should be wise to consider the lessons that are learned here today. Sure, I would always prefer it if people get it right the first time, but through the community and the spirit around the issue of equality, we have seen that if you don't give up, you can carry the day.

On that point, I am so proud of my party and of my leader, the member for Ottawa South, who will later join this debate. I came to this place and joined the caucus only recently, but the Liberal Party has been an important part of my evolution. I love politics. This week, and in the time since I've come here, with lots of good humour in mind, my colleagues have welcomed me. I've begun to make a contribution and the Liberal caucus is one more element of family for me. So to my members who are present here today and to others who may be watching from home on television, I thank them.

Too often debates like this are centred on the notion of special rights, this language about special rights. But what we have before us is much more a bill about new responsibilities and new obligations. Much has been said in the last few days about the issue of the integrity act here at the Legislature and about the Municipal Conflict of Interest Act, about what the impacts are on people who have to date operated in a more closeted way. This is just one example. People will be forced as a result of this legislation to very carefully consider the way that they go about their lives.

The amendments to the Family Law Reform Act in the M. and H. case clearly speak to responsibilities and to the kind of obligations that same-sex partners are now expected to fulfill to their partners. This is a higher standard, but it is one that we accept and will live up to.

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I am going to come to a conclusion shortly, but before I do I'd like to talk about a little bit of unfinished business on the issue of equality rights. This legislation creates some inequities between the Ontario statutes and those in Ottawa. I'm a Liberal—I'm a federal Liberal and a provincial Liberal—and I send the message to those who are here in the galleries, to those who are watching on TV, to those who are in Parliament in Ottawa that the time to act is now. With all of our vigour as a community

we will work hard on this issue, but no better evidence of the possibilities, the capabilities to do it right exists than here in the Ontario Legislature.

In closing, I would like to read just a little more from the Hansard that took place in the debate around Bill 7, December 2, 1986. This is from a constituent of mine, David Peterson:

"However, it is my view that we are extending the most important part of our religious tradition in respecting and loving everyone regardless of sexual orientation, handicap, colour or creed. This is an extension of the traditions that most of us have come from, and I think that, when analyzed in this most basic sense, it says we are doing the finest act we could do to uphold the loving, caring kind of world that we all believe in and that we want to legislate for. Thus, to those members who have difficulty—and I know a number of them do—I say that in supporting this amendment today, we are behaving in the finest and highest traditions of the system of morality we have all grown up in and come to believe in."

In conclusion to his speech, and in conclusion to mine, I offer these words: "I think we can all walk out of this House tonight—I hope this resolution will pass—saying, 'We have done the right thing for Ontario and we are proud all to support it.'"

The Speaker: Before there is further debate, I wanted to point out that Marion Boyd, the former member for London Centre, is in the west gallery.

Further debate.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): First, I'm proud to be able to lead off our party's contribution to this debate, to this discussion, as our justice critic and in my own right.

I'm a little nervous, Speaker, because this is the first time I've had occasion to participate in debate in front of you as the Speaker. You've been around here long enough to know that earlier Speakers have been very mean to me from time to time and less than fair on more than one occasion. If we can start anew, Speaker, you and I, it can be a very productive four years.

So pleased, Speaker, that you acknowledged Marion Boyd here in the members' gallery. As you know, she was Attorney General during the latter half of the NDP government of 1990-95. As you also know, with incredible courage and an incredibly strong and fundamental sense of what's just and what's fair, and what's right and proper, Marion Boyd presented Bill 167 to this Legislature. She has earned a place among our Attorneys General as being among the finest, and as an individual member she was as hard-working, as committed and as passionate about representing her community and building a better province as any member ever could be. The results of the last election were a loss not only for this caucus and the people of London but also for this whole Parliament.

I tell you as well that we support this bill without hesitation. Mr Smitherman made a couple of comments, and well made they were, because this bill isn't about creating new law. This isn't new law; this is giving effect

to the law, because we do have a Constitution, and that Constitution does contain a Charter of Rights and Freedoms. There are millions of people throughout the world who struggle daily and die for the privilege of having a Charter of Rights and Freedoms built into their own national legal structures.

I've got to speak to this little undercurrent here of court-bashing that's been inherent in some of this, that's been going on around the M. and H. decision and similar issues, the court-bashing that goes on when the charter is applied. I'm not sucking up to them, but I quite frankly think we have good judges in this country. We have some bad judges, no two ways about it. But our appellate court in this province and our Supreme Court nationally have led the way internationally in terms of effective and meaningful jurisprudence. Again, that is an indisputable comment. Mr Justice Lamer felt the freedom to comment on this relatively recently. The suggestion that somehow judges are making law is a particularly unfair and incorrect and dishonest one. Judges are applying the law. In M. and H., Justice Epstein at the trial level and the Ontario Court of Appeal and the Supreme Court of Canada, all nine members, applied the law of Canada, the Constitution, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

This government isn't making new law; this government is simply being directed to abide by the law. Even if the government hadn't incorporated the decision, the litigation, between M. and H. into the title of its bill, one would have to refer back to M. and H. in terms of the history of the application of section 15 of the charter to section 29 of the Family Law Reform Act.

What bothers me a little bit is that I suspect that a whole lot of people—you've heard it on radio talk shows, you read it from journalists from time to time. I can't speak for any of them, but I suspect that a whole lot of these people who have pontificated about the decision of M. and H. have probably never, ever read the judgment, read the decision. Dollars to doughnuts, the vast majority of people who have offered gratuitous comment about M. and H. have never read the judgment, and that's unfortunate. They've never read the original motions court judgment by Justice Epstein; they didn't read the Ontario Court of Appeal judgment; they didn't read the Supreme Court of Canada judgment. It is a very careful, quite frankly cautious, very learned application of precedent and Canadian jurisprudence to the determination of the survivability of section 29 of the Family Law Reform Act in the face of section 15.

There are some interesting things, but of course the government of Ontario, the Ministry of the Attorney General, became an intervener when this matter went to the appellate courts here in the province of Ontario. They acquired intervener status by virtue of it being, among other things, a determination of a constitutional issue. I know so far I'm telling it correctly; Ms Boyd's head is going to start shaking the other way if I foul this up.

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The parties at the Ontario Court of Appeal, including the government of Ontario and the Ministry of the Atto-

ney General, were in agreement that section 29 couldn't stand in the face of section 15 of the charter. There was no question about the unconstitutionality of section 15. The Ministry of the Attorney General conceded that. As well, in the first round of filings, the Ministry of the Attorney General—because this decision was made first in motions court back in February 1996. The Ontario Court of Appeal decision was released on May 20, 1999, and then, just six months ago, in the Supreme Court.

But when there was a change in government, there was also dramatically a change in perspective. It was an unfortunate one, because it was an effort, in my view, to politicize, to partisanize what should have been a non-partisan—we've had a whole lot of discussion in the last couple of days about government officials, to wit cabinet ministers, getting into areas where they have no business being, meddling into areas where there are judicial or quasi-judicial proceedings going on.

Please, let's remember what happened by virtue of this government when it did some very specific, in my view, meddling into the appellate court filings. You see, this government decided all of a sudden that while it was forced to acknowledge that section 29 of the Family Law Act couldn't stand in the face of section 15, it then wanted to persuade the courts to utilize section 1 to redeem section 29, basically the section which permits courts to say that there are times, from time to time, when a violation of any number of charter rights can be acceptable if it's deemed appropriate for the safeguarding of, let's say, basic democratic values, or where the goals overcome the violation.

This government not only shifted gears and changed the argument to try to invoke section 1—and it was a very feeble argument, especially after decisions like Egan had been decided already in the Supreme Court of Canada—but it went one further. To think that the Attorney General of this province under this regime actually appears to have, quite frankly, engaged in something akin to obstruction of justice in the course of that. I read from the judgment of the Ontario Court of Appeal, and I read the notation on September 1, 1994: "The Attorney General"—and that was during the NDP government—"intervened, but conceded that section 29 was unconstitutional." Again, that was the proper interpretation of the law. On November 1 that same year, the government filed a factum in support of its position. "On August 16, 1995," after a change of government, "the Attorney General advised it would now be arguing that section 29 was constitutional in that the admitted infringement could be saved under section 1." Listen to this: "The AG removed its first factum"—this is incredible—from the court file without seeking leave to do so and filed a new factum in support of its changed position.

Do you understand what that involves? There are some people here who have been involved in this sort of thing. You go to a court and the courts put all of the various factums, briefs and submissions in one big file and you order that file up, and members of the public are entitled to it as well. But somebody from the ministry of

the AG literally went to Osgoode Hall and as much as pilfered an Ontario Court of Appeal file so that that factum, that brief, would no longer be available to the judges hearing the appeal. That, I submit to you, is a repugnant legacy that this government will have to carry in the whole context of the issue, of the defence and advocacy on behalf of people's rights, people of all sorts and especially, in this case, of gays, lesbians and bisexuals.

I raise that, and maybe others may not find the significance in that. It turns out quite clearly that if anybody should have been busted, it should have been the Attorney General, who would pilfer a court docket like that, a court file—

Interjection.

Mr Kormos: Well, think about it, friends—and remove an essential document that had been filed.

Two women, M. and H., both described as being in their forties, both businesspeople, both professional people, commenced a relationship which involved them living together. It was discussed, in various legal terms, what constitutes conjugal and so on, but that relationship, like many do, fell apart. One party sought relief under the Family Law Act from the other, arguing that she was as entitled to relief under section 29 of the Family Law Act as would be the common-law spouse of any partner. Don't forget, this doesn't change the earlier parts of the Family Law Act that deal with married people. That's a different argument and I'm sure it will be played out at some point. This deals with what we colloquially have called common-law relationships: people who live together in an intimate relationship without being married.

The Ontario Court of Appeal found—and quite frankly, at the trial level the motions judge, Judge Epstein, as well as the Ontario Court of Appeal and, dramatically so, the Supreme Court of Canada—first of all, that section 29 was somewhat extraordinary in its own right.

Some of you are old enough—and I am—to remember the 1978 bill, the Family Law Reform Act. The Attorney General was Roy McMurtry. There was hue and cry across the province. There was. The world is going to hell in a handbasket because, by God, we were going to give people who weren't legally married rights vis-à-vis each other. Roy McMurtry, quite frankly, had to stick-handle his way through that sort of criticism. The Hansard debate and his contribution to it are referred to in the motions court judgment.

One of the explanations that was given for extending spousal rights vis-à-vis support, among other things, to an unmarried spouse was a recognition that unmarried people can have as intense, meaningful, interdependent and conjoined a relationship as married people can have. End of story. One of the rationales was that a common-law spouse upon whom the other is financially dependant should bear some of the cost of restoring the dependant person to self-sufficiency rather than forcing him or her to resort to welfare.

That was considered pretty radical at the time. Indeed, there was a whole lot of stuff written about it in a whole lot of quarters that somehow the government was attacking traditional marriage by condoning common-law relationships, non-married people in spousal relationships.

The date of that bill was 1978, and here we are 21 years later. I don't know what the data is on married or non-married people of the same sex, opposite sex, what have you, in terms of percentages, but we've survived quite well, notwithstanding section 29 and those amendments to the Family Law Act by virtue of the Family Law Reform Act.

The courts made it very clear. They did it in language that should be obvious and clear to any of us. You have a Charter of Rights and Freedoms. In this particular case you're talking about equality before the law. It's not a profound proposition. It's not a particularly complex proposition: equality before the law. Most of us probably thought we lived in a country that enforced the philosophy of equality before the law. It's only as a result of litigation—and George Smitherman spoke of the courage of leadership which has fought this struggle, and I too will mention the Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Rights in Ontario, which has been at the forefront for many, many years now.

You know the sad thing, though? That Constitution has been around for a little while now. That Constitution was around in 1994 when Ms Boyd presented Bill 167. Bill 167 was a bill designed to make sure that people in Ontario have their constitutional rights.

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Nothing has changed between 1994 and 1999 in terms of that Constitution. Nothing has changed in terms of the type of precedence and standards that would be applied to evaluate what constitutes section 1 relief from a charter violation.

What's unfortunate is, yes, that in the province of Ontario a government—and I'll not be partisan. That's part of the beef about these judges who go around meddling in laws that legislators make. As Mr Justice Lamer said so clearly, if you guys—to wit, legislators—don't want us to be doing these sorts of things, then enact the laws properly in the first place and don't leave these big holes where the courts have to step in to protect people's charter and constitutional rights.

In the context of this Parliament, I think that's particularly meaningful. This should be a cautionary note to all of us. When we're confronted with legislation, more often than not presented by the government, we, as legislators, had better make darn sure that it passes fundamental tests of constitutionality and gives effect to those fundamental principles of rights and freedoms, or else, once again, the courts will be stepping in, as they should. If people can't rely upon their elected officials to do what's right, thank God we've got an independent judiciary who will.

I suspect there's a big community out there of gays, lesbians and bisexuals who have felt that their legislators

haven't been able to get it right for a good chunk of time now. Thank God for an independent judiciary that won't be constrained or directed by political considerations, but rather will do what they're entrusted to do and that's to enforce the law and to make sure that parliaments follow the law.

That's what this is about as much as anything else. This is about the Supreme Court of Canada telling the province of Ontario and its government that it has to abide by the law too. Let's understand, the Ontario Court of Appeal decision, in its own right, stood strongly, was unassailable. When you read the judgment of the Supreme Court of Canada and consider the feeble, fragile arguments that were put forward by the Attorney General, it was a bloody embarrassment. I hope those lawyers were well paid because, by God, they weren't given much to work with by the province of Ontario and the arguments were given short shrift by the Supreme Court of Canada.

But it cost the people of this province hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of dollars because M. and H., the two initial litigants, had resolved their differences before this went to the Supreme Court of Canada. They had settled. There was concession. The prevailing argument, the one about the unconstitutionality of section 29, which permits two women who have a conjugal relationship to enter into that realm covered by section 29, that concession was made and it was clear. There was no more argument.

The government forced them to the Supreme Court of Canada and exploited its status as intervenor to force an appeal—as I say, a patently fragile, feeble and, quite frankly, groundless appeal—to the Supreme Court of Canada. We raised that as a question in the very early part of 1999, this year, just before the last Parliament was dissolved for the purpose of the election.

There was great concern over the fact that two litigants who had settled their differences and had no further need for litigation were forced into ongoing litigation at great expense on what was an extremely feckless attack on the rationale of the Ontario Court of Appeal.

We also should take a look at where we stand here today with this bill vis-à-vis not just the rest of the country but the rest of the world. Some folks gave me a little bit of history of what's been happening internationally.

In October 1989, Denmark passes a registered partnership law which grants same-sex couples the rights of married couples vis-à-vis one another.

In January 1994, the European Parliament, a democratically elected body of the European Union, declares that homosexual couples, as their language was, be allowed to marry.

In 1994, Greenland's Parliament votes to make the 1989 Danish law of registered partnerships for same-sex couples valid in Greenland.

In June 1994, the Swedish Parliament votes for a registered partnership law, once again creating same-sex partnerships, same-sex spousal status.

In May 1996, the Hungarian Parliament, the Parliament of a free and democratic Hungary—let me tell you this: The reality is that the most oppressive regimes when it comes to same-sex relationships and to gay, lesbian and bisexual people are also the most totalitarian regimes. It would have been unthinkable for a communist totalitarian Hungary to have passed the legislation that the Hungarian Parliament passed in May 1996 giving same-sex common-law couples similar status to heterosexual common-law couples.

In July 1996, Iceland registers domestic partnership options for same-sex couples.

In 1996, Belgium makes common-law same-sex couples eligible for the same UI benefits.

In May 1997, in Argentina, in a court ruling, a judge rules that same-sex couples can claim cohabitation certificates on the same basis as opposite-sex couples.

In December 1997, the African National Congress at its national conference tasks its representatives in all levels of government to establish equality for lesbian and gay people in the following areas in particular—and let's understand the context of this. You're talking about a country, South Africa, that has been the victim of a cruel apartheid over the course of decades and decades. You're talking about people who have struggled against that type of bigotry and discrimination. It's within that context that the ANC realizes that the struggle for liberation is a broad-based one and they call upon all of their representatives to establish equality for lesbian and gay people in the areas of family rights, maintenance and immigration, among other things; equal right for people of the same sex to marry.

In July 1998, the Austrian Parliament votes to include same-sex partners in the penal code definition of next of kin in terms of who is excluded from testifying against you in court.

In March 1999, the Czech cabinet—and once again, let's understand the history. Czechoslovakia, as it was before the Czech and Slovak republics' respective independence, was a communist country where the suggestion of equality for gays, lesbians and bisexuals would have been simply not even dreamt of or not even dared to be considered. It's only after the Czech Republic acquires its freedom from communist control that the Czech cabinet approves domestic partnership registration that includes same-sex relationships.

In April 1999, New Zealand, same-sex couples.

In May 1999, Denmark increases rights under the registered partnership law, effectively where you can identify you and your partner, you and your spouse, you and your conjugal relationship as being partners. You can register that so that there's public acknowledgement of it and respective rights and obligations vis-à-vis one another.

In Finland in mid-1999, a government committee recommends a registered partnership law with all the rights of heterosexuals.

It's not as if we're exactly leading edge here. Sorry, Mr Attorney General, this isn't a revolutionary bill. In

fact a whole lot of places in the world have led the way. I submit to you that we are but following now and, if anything, should have a sense of regret, should have a desire to tell our families, family members, friends, neighbours, relatives and co-workers who are gays, lesbians and bisexuals, should have some sort of obligation to extend some modest apology for having been so late in the game.

1930

Here in Canada two jurisdictions—British Columbia in July of this year passed their Definition of Spouse Amendment Act. They didn't weasel out of it by creating yet another category, "same-sex partner"; they used the rather generic legal term "spouse," which has no connotations of religious conformity or any of those things. "Spouse" is a very generic and very legal term. As I say, BC didn't weasel out of it. They called it the Definition of Spouse Amendment Act, which adds to the definition of "spouse" in compliance with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which is key.

When I hear the court-bashing, I'm concerned. Have we got people in this country, in this province and in this city who don't believe in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms? Do we really have people who don't want everybody to have the same access to the same freedoms, who somehow think we should be living in a society or in a culture where some have rights and freedoms and others don't? You can't do it that way.

If people want to raise that debate, then let's hear them clearly talk about how they don't want to have a Charter of Rights and Freedoms, how they don't believe in those sorts of things. Let's hear from them, but let's hear it clear and straight. If they don't believe in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, let them say so, instead of weaving and bobbing and using all kinds of code language and looking at targets and trying to beat up on people who they think may be less capable of defending themselves.

A month earlier, in Quebec, it was Bill 32. It passed third reading, and it was very similar to this bill. It amended 28 provincial laws. It understood the importance and effect and meaning of what the Charter of Rights and Freedoms has to say.

It's already been commented upon that this creates not only rights but responsibilities. Again, one would think that in our communities we should be eager to see people accept and be responsible for their responsibilities vis-à-vis other people with whom they've created a relationship of interdependency and dependency.

I want you to know, Speaker, that every member of this caucus—I suppose that's relatively easy for me to say; there aren't that many of us now—is supportive of this legislation.

Tony Martin from Sault Ste Marie spoke with me today, with great regret, because he had to be there for some events that were firmly committed to before the scheduling for this, because this has all happened very quickly. Tony Martin from Sault Ste Marie asked me to very clearly indicate on the record that he gives this bill

his full support and regrets being unable to be here today to vote as the other members of caucus are.

Shelley Martel is trying her best to get here but she is negotiating with a babysitters' union or something, trying to get some overtime out of some daycare or child care people. She's going to try to get here in time for a vote, but she also wanted it to be quite clear—she's got a little girl and little guy, Jonathan—that if she can't be here it's because she was unable to get somebody to care for the two kids. She similarly wanted me to indicate that in the event that she can't get here, this bill has her full support.

We have a team here in the NDP caucus, so I promised my colleagues on the team that I would be a team player tonight and that I would not monopolize—

Mr Christopherson: We wouldn't hold you beyond—

Mr Kormos: Look, I'm still the lowest-paid member of the caucus. I want you to understand that.

I do want to indicate that I'm going to leave some time for my colleagues to address this. I hope that the matters I've spoken to have perhaps been of some help to folks who are watching or listening in terms of understanding how we got to this point and what this legislation is really all about.

Please just let me state again: We are blessed in terms of where in the world we live and how we live. Those blessings include the right to be protected by a Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and we should take those blessings oh so seriously and this shouldn't be a grudging act on anybody's part. We should be proud to be in compliance with a court direction that will ensure that we as legislators ensure that all Ontarians are truly equal before the law.

The Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): Mr Speaker, I haven't yet had the opportunity to congratulate you. I join all those voices who promise to honour your rulings, or at least endeavour to honour your rulings, and proceed in accordance with the rules of the House.

I rise today in my capacity as the critic for the Attorney General for the official opposition. Let me say at the beginning, I join in the words of the member for Toronto Centre-Rosedale in congratulating and thanking the great lawyers at the Ministry of the Attorney General, who were very professional, so professional that they wouldn't let us leave with any notes after the briefing—loyal to a fault, perhaps, but we appreciate that. I thank the Attorney General also for consulting with us and letting us know the timing of what was happening and also the substance of the act. Thank you for that.

This bill, as has been said, is about both rights and responsibilities. It takes important steps to enhance the support and maintenance rights of children and dependent partners in broken relationships. It takes some very important steps towards equality in imposing the same support and maintenance obligations upon same-sex couples as now exist for opposite-sex common-law spouses.

This bill is named after the decision of *M. v. H.*, but that is not the only one that guides us in our deliberations in this House today.

In 1995, in the decision of *Egan*, the Supreme Court of Canada unanimously affirmed that sexual orientation is protected under the charter as an equality right. Sexual orientation was said by the court to be "a deeply personal characteristic," in the words of the court, "that is either unchangeable or changeable only at unacceptable personal costs." The majority of the court went on to explicitly recognize gays, lesbians and bisexuals as individuals or couples forming "an identifiable minority who have suffered and continue to suffer serious social, political and economic disadvantage."

This was a historic affirmation by the court. There is nothing in the text of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms speaking to sexual orientation. It was said to be an analogous ground, like marriage and citizenship and place of residence—those areas where the court has said that there will be equality guarantees even though it's not written into the charter.

How does a court decide that a minority on which the Constitutions is silent ought to receive protection? To a large extent, that's the issue that is before this House. Put another way, when is it appropriate for the courts to get ahead of the Legislature in recognition of rights and responsibilities?

1940

This week the honourable intergovernmental affairs minister attempted to scapegoat the Supreme Court of Canada by decrying so-called judicial activism. During question period the minister would not name a case or a judge which this government disagreed with. So we asked the question: When is it appropriate for the courts to intervene? Well, we're not getting an answer from the government. In fact, where the legislatures fail to align their laws with the Constitution, citizens will fight back in the courts and the courts will nudge lawmakers back into line. It's easy to scapegoat the Supreme Court of Canada and it's easy to scapegoat those who cannot fight back. It's easy to forget that the courts do not speak in a vacuum, but rather respond to cases brought before them by people, people who often cannot get an audience with their elected legislators.

Does that mean that every case requires that the courts nudge us back into line? Of course not. So when? Bruce Ackerman, a constitutional scholar, has observed that one person's prejudice against gays and lesbians is another's principle. We have heard, outside of this House, not in this House, those who claim it to be a principle. I call it a prejudice.

If the court is not to have a judicial oligarchy, then we cannot have a situation where they're substituting their morality over that of the Legislature. Let's be clear. That's not what happened in this case. The Supreme Court of Canada did not substitute their morality for that of the Legislature, but the courts can and do require that the Legislature consider whether the prejudice is princi-

ple. They can ensure that the process gives everyone a fair shake.

So it has been in Canada, with the Supreme Court of Canada's decisions in Egan; in Vriend, an Alberta case; and in M. v. H. In those cases, where the rights to equality were said to be violated due to discrimination based on sexual orientation, the court was not substituting their morality in place of the majority of a provincial Legislature; rather they were engaging in the ongoing dialogue that takes place between the great branches of our federalist state.

In Vriend, Mr Justice Iacobucci wrote the judgement and let's be clear here. Mr Justice Iacobucci was appointed by Brian Mulroney. He's the former Deputy Attorney General who was present at the Meech Lake Accord negotiations that the honourable Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs referred to before. He is above reproach. I'm not suggesting he's partisan, but nobody is going to confuse him with a Liberal. Here's how Mr Justice Iacobucci described this dialogue. He said:

"In carrying out their duties, courts are not to second-guess legislatures and the executives; they are not to make value judgments on what they regard as the proper policy choice; this is for the elected branches"—that's for us to do. "But respect by the courts for the Legislature and executive role is as important as ensuring that the other branches respect each other's role and the role of the courts."

That respect requires a dialogue. Here's what Justice Iacobucci had to say about that:

"In fashioning a remedy with regard to a charter violation, a court must be mindful of the role of the Legislature. Moreover, s. 33, the notwithstanding clause, establishes that the final word in our constitutional structure is in fact left to the Legislature and not the courts.

"The charter has given rise to a more dynamic interaction among the branches of governance."

That's the dialogue. The great value of judicial review, said Justice Iacobucci, is that this dialogue among the branches ensures accountability between the branches. The work of the Legislature is reviewed by the courts and the work of the court in its decisions is reviewed by the Legislature. That's what we are seeing here today. The Legislature is responding to the court's defence of a minority discriminated against by the family support laws of Ontario.

But let's be clear here. The dialogue can work in different ways. The Supreme Court of Canada did not mandate under M. v. H. that a comprehensive bill take place. It was discretionary. The Legislature "may" do this. Nor is any decision of the court inviolable. Section 33 always remains an option, that democratic instrument, however offensive to some.

But neither of those alternatives, a narrow reading of the legislation, the use of section 33, would have done justice to the laws of this province. "Discrimination anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere," Dr King's words remind us always. There are no compromises

when it comes to discrimination. Either the laws of Ontario will continue to discriminate against same-sex couples or they will not. Either we in this House will stand up for equality and justice for all or we'll neglect our constitutional responsibility to ensure that the laws comply with the charter.

There are no angels in this House, not on this issue, but tonight we are doing the right thing. The best we can do is lean towards the lights of equality and justice, and not towards the shadow of discrimination. Tonight we're leaning the right way. We agree with this bill. I support it and our party supports it.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-East York): I am feeling so proud and so privileged to be here tonight and to be able to take part in this historic debate and this historic moment with the passage of this legislation.

I look in the galleries and I see friends, and friends and their families, and acquaintances, and constituents, and some friends and constituents combined up there. My heart is just overjoyed in a sense of shared celebration with those of you from the gay and lesbian community and supporters of rights for gays and lesbians who are joined here tonight. This is a time for us to be proud—a rocky road, a long road. The fight that you have undergone, the struggle that you have withstood—and maintained fortitude—and the oppressive nature of living in a society that has refused to recognize you and your families, and your love for each other and for your children, and all of what goes along with that, that has been recognized for others in laws and statutes, this is quite incredible.

One of the proudest moments I have ever had as an elected politician—I was elected in 1990 and right into the Rae government cabinet. I'd have to check the record, but I think the very first official act as a minister in the Legislature was when I stood as Chair of Management Board and announced extension of benefits to same-sex partners, employees of the Ontario public service. I got a letter shortly after that from Jesse. I knew Jesse. Jesse is the daughter of friends of mine, Cathy and Sue. Jesse sent me a letter with a picture, and the picture was a huge smile with braces on the teeth, because for the first time Jesse had been able to go to the dentist to get the dental work that she needed, that she wanted. It was important to her. She was a young girl who was going through that stage, and this was important for her self-esteem. It was an incredible gift from her. It was an incredible gift of recognition of just what that one thing meant to her in her life and her family's life.

One of the saddest and darkest moments that I have ever experienced as a member of the Legislature, an elected politician, was the day of the defeat of Bill 167, when members of all three political parties joined in enough numbers to defeat that government legislation. I agree with the member from Toronto Centre-Rosedale and the comment he made. I pay tribute to him in his remarks and comments here, but as he said, people listen and people learn. There will be people here tonight who will join their voices together on all sides of the House,

some of whom were here for Bill 167 and who voted against that piece of legislation.

I'm delighted that they have listened and they have learned and they have accepted the change that needs to be done. I'm delighted that tonight we will join our voices together with those in the gallery and out in the community who have struggled for so long. I'm delighted to be part of what I think is truly for a Legislature and a legislator one of the most important moments when you can be part of passing progressive legislation that affects people's lives in such a positive way, that brings an end to oppression and to discrimination and brings about a sense of equality and justice.

Mr Speaker, it's a proud moment. I thank you for the opportunity to participate in the debate.

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Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): Mr Speaker, let me first of all join the others in congratulating you on your election to the chair.

This is a truly momentous occasion, a long time in coming, many hills and many valleys. I join my colleagues—as you know, our caucus supports this bill. You will hear from additional members of our caucus this evening.

One thing that I think is fairly significant is that the very day after Dalton McGuinty was elected as leader of our party, he was on CBC's noonday magazine and was asked the question by a caller, "Could I just get an idea of your stand on same-sex spousal benefits?" Dalton went on unequivocally to express his particular support.

I was rereading that this evening, and because there are so many members of my caucus who want to share this information, I won't take the full time to point this out, but he goes on to say:

"It's important that people can find some kind of a place where they can go. You can call it home, you can call it a refuge, you can call it whatever you like, but where there's someone else—and I don't care who the other person is, whether it's a gay relationship or a lesbian relationship, or whether it's an elderly father who's being cared for by someone else—wherever there's a nurturing, caring relationship, people loving each other, looking after each other, they must be supported. I tell you, no one can do it better than two individuals who have that kind of a relationship because government cannot do it."

The spirit of that speaks volumes for me.

As human rights critic for the Ontario Liberal Party, I must tell you that on many occasions in that role, and even prior to that particular role, I can recall writing to the Honourable Allan Rock, who was then the federal Minister of Justice, in April 1996 to express my strong support of the inclusion of sexual orientation as prohibited grounds for discrimination in the Canadian Human Rights Act. I have a letter here and I recall reading that.

In my role as human rights critic for our party, I have heard personally from many same-sex couples who were distraught about the fact that they were not entitled to the same rights enjoyed by opposite-sex common-law cou-

ples and that they would gladly accept the responsibilities if the rights were extended.

As I have said, this bill is long overdue. I would like to quote from a press release going as far back as two and a half years ago from our human rights commissioner who asked and called upon the Ontario government to revise, at that time, 16 laws which violate the rights of gays and lesbians. We're going beyond that this evening, which I think is a wise thing to do and an important thing to do.

It seems to me that—it's been referred to twice already—the courts should not be in a position necessarily to make policy. However, some may say they do in the absence of guts by politicians. I think tonight is an example where, while it is overdue, it is a benchmark, landmark time in our history, as evidenced by some of our friends who are in the galleries this evening. There were many, many evenings I spent here till 9:30, 12 o'clock at night and there's nobody here, believe me, everyone has gone home. There's obviously something of significance and something of import.

As the minister said when he introduced this bill, by the way, it will not change the definition of "marriage," "family" or "spouse"; it will simply guarantee the rights of individuals. It is sad that the motive, it seems to me, is only because of the Supreme Court directive and not a response to many, many people in our society. I am told by a survey done in our local newspaper, the Ottawa Citizen, that in my riding of Ottawa Centre—at least in the old riding; it's now expanded and it's perhaps a little less—we have about 18% members from the gay-lesbian-bisexual community. That's a fairly large percentage of a particular population. You can imagine the discussions and meetings I have in my particular riding and the appreciation I have learned about what people face on a day-to-day basis.

It's to the credit, though, of the government that it has gone further than what the Supreme Court has ordered. Bill 5 is going to change 67 provincial statutes. That is particularly important.

The bill will finally give people living in common-law same-sex relationships the same rights, obligations and responsibilities of people living in common-law opposite-sex relationships, which is in essence creating an entitlement that has been reserved heretofore for the opposite-sex couples.

This legislation takes the prohibition against discrimination based on sexual orientation obviously to its logical conclusion.

As children's critic for my party, I'd like to comment on the fact that many same-sex couples are already in families that include children. I say this for those people that I bump into who don't think in terms of many same-sex couples who are already parents and who are operating as a family. This is particularly important. I recall a survey that was shared with us at one of our hearings we had here in this place about a couple of years ago.

I'm being notified by my colleagues that my time is running out, because too many people want to speak on this issue.

So in summary, I want to say that as Liberals we are proud to support fairness and equity and equality for gays and lesbians in Ontario. Bill 5 is very significant, a step forward for equality, because discrimination is no longer tolerable. The issue is not about, as some people would say, "special rights"; it really is about equal rights and it's about recognizing the humanity of our community in that we all have a heart, we all have blood, we all want to be happy, we all want to give, we all want to make a contribution to our community, and we want to receive respect. I will be supporting this particular bill, as my caucus will, because I believe this will be one of those cornerstones on which we move along the road to providing some respect for some important members of our community.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I want to thank my buddy from Niagara Centre for having left me four or five minutes to participate in this debate. I appreciated that and I loved his remarks, of course, notwithstanding.

I want to say that I have from time to time excoriated this minister and this government. I want to try tonight not to do that, because I really believe that they have done the right thing. I congratulate them for what they have done and for having done more than what was required by the law. Indeed, the court required Ontario to amend only one law, the Family Law Act, and he and his government went further and changed 67 other acts. That's a good thing. I want to be able, from time to time, to declare that they have done some good things and not constantly vilify them for everything they have done badly. They do do bad things most of the time, but in this regard they've done the right thing. It does take courage.

I'm sure, from that caucus, there have been many members who didn't want to do what this minister, this cabinet, and eventually the caucus have done. I want to thank them, and thank them on behalf of the many people who have had the courage to openly be who they are, and thank them on behalf of those who still do not have the strength to admit their sexuality with their parents, with their family and with their friends.

Particularly, I want to thank you for a good friend of mine, another good friend whom I've known for about 20 years, who has never had the courage to come out except in the last four or five years. I imagine the pain that he has and had for literally a third of his lifetime, not to be able to tell his family and friends, including me, that he was gay. I thank you on his behalf—his name is Andres; I want to say it for the record in case he ever sees this—because I know that in the last four or five years it has been liberating for him to be able to tell me, my partner, Evelyn, and his family and his friends that he's gay.

2000

I want to say, Minister, that our problem is that as governments we do not lead on issues of equity. In fact, you were forced to do what you did, and you admitted as much. In the bill, you say quite clearly, An Act to amend certain statutes because of the Supreme Court of Canada decision in *M. v. H.* It is a bloody shame that we as par-

liamentarians and as governments have to follow the courts in order to do the right thing. The right thing is to give equality rights to everyone. They're not demanding special rights, as the member from Toronto Centre-Rosedale said, but equality rights, human rights that are their due as human beings.

To the minister and his government, there are two things that I find shameful. I want to be able to say them. While those who are gay, lesbian and bisexual will take any right, however it's conferred upon them, it is rather shameful that you, with the courage of changing 67 other statutes, had to have the fecklessness to say, "We did it because—" It makes you weak rather than strong, I want to tell you. With that same courage with which you've been able to change 67 other acts, you then, with the Alberta Premier, jointly sent a message to the Prime Minister and to the federal parliamentarians that you want to have a say in terms of the appointments that are made to the Supreme Court. That's a way of saying that you don't agree with what you've done. I think that's shameful, to have had the courage to do what you've done, for which I thank you, but to find so many other ways to justify it in a way that makes you graceless and weak as a government.

I hope you don't pursue those courses you have outlined and, rather, take credit for having done something that makes your government look good and gives rights to people who have sought redress for so long.

The Speaker: The member for Don Valley East.

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): Thank you, Speaker, and congratulations from all the residents of Don Valley East on your elevation to the chair.

I'm pleased to be speaking to this bill this evening and I'm pleased to be supporting this bill. The Supreme Court decision was the right thing to do. Supporting this bill is definitely the right thing to do. That's why I would like to address the House, the members of the House and the people of Ontario here this evening: why it was the right decision, and more importantly, why the way in which the government has approached this is quite disappointing to me.

I want to share with this House part of my history as a member of a local school board. I was a member of the North York Board of Education; in fact, a member of the government, the member from Willowdale, was my colleague on that board. We passed policies that recognized same-sex relationships. I was then and I remain today extremely proud of those actions. You see, we didn't wait for the Supreme Court to make a ruling. We didn't wait for lawsuits to be filed against us. We did it because it was the right thing to do, plain and simple.

We knew it was the right thing to recognize relationships that our employees at the board of education were involved in. We knew our policies should not treat one common-law relationship any differently from another common-law relationship. We changed the way we drafted our policies, in fact we changed our policies, because it simply was the right thing to do.

I'm especially proud that I'm a member of a political party that had promised to make these changes because they were the right things to do, not because we felt forced into making these kinds of decisions. Same-sex couples deserve the same rights and responsibilities that other common-law couples enjoy. It is the right thing and that's why we did commit to making those changes. I'm very proud of our leader, Dalton McGuinty, for taking a very principled stand.

This government should be introducing this legislation because we are being principled. They should show some leadership on a significant human rights issue. Instead, I was saddened when I heard the Attorney General stand in his place and introduce a bill entitled An Act to amend certain statutes because of the Supreme Court decision in *M. v. H.* He might very well have called the bill, "The devil made me do it and I don't truly believe in what I'm doing." Perhaps that is the case.

To have the government use this historic opportunity to attack the Supreme Court was truly shocking to me, as I know it is to most Ontarians. I was left wondering what the government would have said if they were involved in introducing a bill, say many years ago, that would have given women the right to vote after a Supreme Court ruling. Would the Attorney General have stood in his place and said, as he introduced a bill, "We're introducing An Act to extend voting rights to women because the Supreme Court of Canada has made us do it, not because we believe that men and women should be equal under the law"? What if the ruling was to end discrimination based on race? Would the Premier and the Attorney General have stood in their place to introduce An Act to end discrimination based upon race because the Supreme Court of Canada made us do it, and not because all people in this country are equal under the law?

I do doubt that even this government would have the gall to do either of those two things, which is why it is curious that they have chosen this particular issue and this particular bill and this particular time to make this kind of stand.

This House should be showing leadership. I am truly proud of our caucus, our leader and our members for having the principle to stand in our place to do the right thing and to truly mean it.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Broadview-Greenwood): We're going to have one hell of a Gay Pride Day celebration next year, then, Kyle and everybody. But I have to say—

Interjection.

Ms Churley: I know. Let's get ready.

I have to say that there's something a little bit unreal—surreal, I suppose—about tonight because, as many of you know, I suffered through the shame, under an NDP government, of Bill 167 being defeated. I, to this day—I'm sure not as much as you from the community—feel ashamed and quite apologetic for our failure at that time. I'm not going to shy away from it tonight; I'm going to acknowledge it. We failed you. I have to tell you that it's surreal, because here we sit tonight, quietly and

patiently waiting for the end of the debate, because we know in full confidence that, under a Tory government yet, this is going to pass at the end of the night, albeit by a voice vote. OK, I'm not going to get partisan tonight. I'm not going to play games tonight. I am happy with this government tonight. I love you guys tonight.

Mr Marchese: Don't go so far.

Ms Churley: I'm going too far.

Seriously, it doesn't matter to me why you are doing it; you are in fact doing it.

Interjections.

Ms Churley: If you want me to not go over my four minutes, you'd better be quiet here.

In all seriousness, I don't care why you're doing it. I don't care about the title of the bill and that it says we're doing it because we have to. These people in these galleries tonight and who are watching on TV are the real heroes of tonight. We wouldn't have had the court case succeed and we wouldn't have had the movement over the years in the community—and our polls show that the support is there, and I think the government knows that. That helped them with their decision.

The support is there, and it is because of these people, not us politicians. It's because of you that we are here tonight—it doesn't matter under which government—doing this tonight. You're the heroes and we want to thank you for all the work you've done on equal rights, because this is about family and about love and about connection and people taking care of each other.

I want to say one last word to members of the Tory caucus, because I did suffer through with members from our caucus who couldn't support this because they thought they might be defeated, it wouldn't be acceptable in their communities and all that stuff.

I want to say to those in either caucus, if there are any in the Liberal caucus or in the Tory caucus, don't be afraid to support this bill and don't be ashamed that your government is doing this. You are going to go down in history. This is historic, which is the other reason this is so surreal tonight. We're having such an historic debate. Look around. It's incredible. But the main thing is that we are doing this tonight, and I don't want the Tories to ever quote me on saying "I love you" tonight. I take it back right now.

Anyway, congratulations to all. We have more work to do. As our critic Peter Kormos pointed out, it didn't go as far as it should have in terms of the spouse and in BC, but boy, we've come a long way tonight and thanks to everybody.

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): I'm very pleased to be able to say a few words tonight, but in the context that everyone has adopted, which is appropriate humility for people in this House. This bill is making its way into existence tonight. We only have a certain kind of role in putting it there, and I think it's wise that everyone has acknowledged that.

But there is a job for us here today and in subsequent days. The bill by itself doesn't deal with the root causes of what the Supreme Court ruled on. It doesn't deal with

the fear that too many people in society still feel. It behooves us as legislators to pass this bill with some fair emphasis, which many people have made tonight, to reflect that it really is time for society to deal with this in as clear and as comprehensive a fashion as possible.

There is no basis to make judgments against members of society based on sexual orientation. There is no basis to deny access to benefits, access to the basics of enjoyment of life for anyone in this society based on sexual orientation. There is a role for us in this House to affirm that, not just through this legislation but through our subsequent actions and the way that we conduct ourselves.

In terms of the public interest, this House walks behind the public interest. I disagree with people who say that the Supreme Court has forced us to do this, because I believe society has been long ready to do this, to provide the kind of provisions that this bill does.

The reality tonight is that we're doing nothing more than confirming the civil rights that people already should have had. The resistance has been on the part of legislators across the country. I say to the people out there who have other bases to disagree with this legislation, this is about people's civil rights. This is about the public values of this country. This is not about people's individual rights, whether they're theological or otherwise, in terms of the way that they want to reflect how society should live. The civil rights that are conferred upon people are inviolable. That's what the law today extends to same-sex couples, quite a time after it was due.

I don't think there's any glory to be divided up for the bill that we have tonight, but I do reflect a small amount of gratitude to be able to be here at a time when the Legislature is able to act with an appropriate amount of civility, an appropriate amount of determination, because there are other ways that this could have gone in terms of this bill being brought forward in the way it has been, and with an appropriate amount of awakening on the part of the people in this House that this is more than due. We have been prompted to this spot, but we have embraced the opportunity to do not just the right thing but to do the thing we were elected for in the first place, to protect the rights of people who need protecting. I hope, indeed, that this bill isn't the end of that as it comes to the gay and lesbian community but simply the beginning.

M. Gilles Bisson (Timmins-Baie James) : Je veux dire ici ce soir à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario ce que j'ai dit en juin 1994 : oui à une loi qui donne le droit, l'habileté directement aux personnes de cette province, d'aller rechercher leurs droits dedans. Autour de ce projet de loi 167 dans le temps, je me rappelle bien qu'il y avait un certain débat public qui se passait. Il y avait certains commentaires qui ont été faits par de différentes personnes de cette Assemblée. On a vu du monde s'organiser contre le projet de loi 167 dans le temps.

À la fin de la journée j'étais l'un des députés, pareil comme le restant des députés du Nouveau Parti démocratique d'aujourd'hui, qui avons voté en faveur,

mais on n'en a pas été assez pour être capables de passer cette loi dans le temps.

Je suis fier d'être ici aujourd'hui pour avoir la chance encore une fois, avoir une deuxième chance en politique. C'est quelque chose qui n'est pas souvent accordé aux politiciens et politiciennes de n'importe quelle juridiction, d'être capable de voter « oui » en faveur des droits qu'on donne à toutes les personnes de cette province, tels qu'ils existent, directement aux personnes gaies et lesbiennes.

I want to say that it's somewhat ironic that we find ourselves in this year, in this time, seeing this law being passed by a Conservative government. Nonetheless I have to believe that there has been a change of heart or there's been a change in politics. I won't go there, because this is supposed to be non-partisan. But if we finally find ourselves at this point tonight, I think it's by and large because of the work that has been done within the community by people before us to finally change to a certain extent the public mood, but more important, to be able to affirm in court what should have been given to people a long time ago, way back in 1994.

So I will do as I did in 1994: I will stand in my place as the member for Timmins-James Bay—and I would vote yes if there were a recorded vote—in support of this law, because I think it is a law that is important and long past due to give people the rights they justly deserve. It's unfortunate it will be a voice vote, but I want to put on the record that I will vote yes, as I did in 1994.

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): Mr Speaker, I am very proud as well to be here on this historic night and to be part of an evening which is really quite remarkable in the Ontario Legislature, one where we have an opportunity to be part of ending discrimination, one where we have an opportunity to do something in a very positive vein in the way of human rights.

Certainly I can tell you as a legislator who has now been re-elected, and I'm very proud to have been, that when I began the process of entering this business it was one of my goals and my dreams to make a difference, to be able to be part of something that would deal with equality, that would fight back against discrimination.

It's been a long process to get here. We all understand that. I am very proud to be able to stand here tonight and be a small part of making a huge difference, in this particular case to the gay and lesbian community in this province. It is something that perhaps has been a long time coming, it is something that is not always understood by everyone, but we are moving forward. It is heartening to be part of a discussion tonight where there does seem to truly be a joining of the minds and the hearts and the souls of the people in this chamber. It is an honour for me to stand here and say I will be supporting Bill 5. I am very proud of our leader and our caucus for the part we've played, and I am happy to be able to put my feelings on the record.

Mr Christopherson: Like all those who have spoken before me, I am very proud of the fact that I have the

honour of being elected at a time when I can stand in this place at this moment and give my voice and my vote to supporting what really should be a major celebration.

I appreciate that everybody wants to be non-partisan and wonderful and feel good but, you know, down the road, in 10, 20, 30, 50 years, they're going to look back and somebody is going to be studying for one reason or another the things that are said, and I sure wouldn't want to leave the wrong impression here. The fact of the matter is that this is being done because this government is being forced to do it.

It's a shame that the politics being played go so far as to name the bill the way they have. It ought to be something we're very proud of. The bill ought to be called "An Act to guarantee Ontarians all the rights they're entitled to" or "An Act to give effect to the rights that Ontarians have been waiting for." Why isn't there something positive here? But to come out and say "An Act to amend certain statutes because of the Supreme Court of Canada decision in *M. v. H.*" is a shame. It somewhat taints what's happening.

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I want to tell everybody something else that's going on that you don't know right now: There's not going to be a recorded vote. That doesn't change anything, a voice vote still gives effect to the law the same as a recorded vote, but there won't be a recorded vote, because there's fear that that vote might be deferred until tomorrow, which any party can do, and by doing that, the political message that goes out of here is: Whatever party did that is trying to block this. The reality is that it's in part to flush out those who are standing in the bushes, who are going to go along with this but aren't going to put their names forward. Quite frankly, I really regret the fact that I'm not going to get a chance to stand in my place and put my vote on the record so it's there forever, because I'm proud of it.

I remember the hate phone calls that I and many of us got when Bill 167 was in this place. You could feel that emotion, the hate seething throughout Ontario. This place was a powder keg. Yet there was something that felt good—before the vote—about saying, "I'm going to be there because it's the right thing to do." If you started to weaken at any point because you were attacked—and I am sure I'm not the only one to be verbally attacked in the doughnut store on the corner, or to open up mail and find the most hate kind of literature you could ever see—there was still something inside, when you reached in and said to yourself: "I don't care what's going on. This is a human rights issue, and if I violate on this principle, then I deny everything that I ever said about why I want to be here."

I agree with my colleague Marilyn Churley, who says it's somewhat surreal. With great respect, Speaker, it almost seems like Rod Serling ought to be in the chair, because this is a different universe from where we were just five years ago.

Having said all of that, because I had to get it off my chest—it bugs me that they're getting away with this,

but, yeah, I do feel better. I can't love them, but I can at least say that I am glad we're at the point that, for whatever reason—and sometimes as Canadians we think we've already reached supersaturation or critical mass around rights and freedoms that you can give people and, "Gee, you know, if there's anything more given, it's either over the top or somebody is getting some rights and I'm losing some rights." But that's not the case. Rights and freedoms have never in the history of humanity come without a struggle, and Canada and Ontario are no exception to that. As quiet and as civilized as it is here this evening, this is the culmination of hundreds of years of discrimination, and I agree with members earlier who have said, "The job is not yet done." But I will join in celebrating that, for whatever reason, under whatever circumstances, under whatever government, we're at least going to take a huge step forward today, and for that I am indeed very proud to be here this evening.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): I don't intend to speak long, and I can't speak with the eloquence and lifetime commitment that my colleague from Toronto Centre-Rosedale does, nor with the legal precision that my colleague from St Paul's did, but I do want to get up in my place tonight and say to the people that sent me here, the people in Windsor-St Clair, that I'm voting in favour of this bill; I'm standing in my place in support of it.

I had the honour to be here in December 1986 when the government of the day passed the amendments to the Human Rights Code that prevented discrimination based on sexual orientation, and I was proud to be here the day another government passed the French Language Services Act, and I'm truly proud to be here today to tell the people who sent me here that I'm voting for this because it's right and it's long overdue. In doing so, I want to acknowledge to those people that this is another step and that it is incumbent upon all of us, now that we have the law, to enforce the law and to respect our brothers and sisters; and they truly are our brothers and sisters. They are our brothers-in-law, they are our daughters, they are our sons. I say to them that I stand here today proud to cast my vote in favour of this bill.

I'm thinking of, and I know activists in the gay community too will think of, my federal colleague the late Shaughnessy Cohen, who was the chair of the justice committee in Ottawa and truly championed this issue until her untimely passing just under a year ago. I say to my federal brethren that she set the tone and all of you have pledged to live up to her reputation. I say to my federal colleagues, "Do the right thing and move quickly," as my colleague from St George said, and we will join you in that pride.

I'm disappointed that government members won't stand in their place and lend the kind of generosity of spirit and tone that I've witnessed here in other debates at other times, but I do hope that all of us have learned the lessons of the mistakes we all made in the past and that we all agree to go forward now, saying to our brothers and our sisters and our sons and our daughters that you

are equal, that we will live that code and that we will honour you in our society as we honour everyone else.

This is truly an historic evening. I'm proud to be able to cast my vote for this legislation, and I'm proud of all members of the House who are here tonight and who are taking this next very fundamental and important step.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): I am certainly proud and pleased to join in the debate tonight along with my colleagues on all three sides of the House. This is truly an historic and proud evening for this Legislature and for the province of Ontario. Tonight is an opportunity for this Legislature to erase a black mark that has hung over this place for the last few years, an opportunity to do the right thing and an opportunity to ensure that all Ontarians are treated fairly and equally in all aspects of life in this province of ours.

I want to thank Premier Harris. This is probably the only time I will say that in the four years in this Legislature, because I fundamentally disagree with almost everything he stands for. However, in my view, on this issue the Premier has shown leadership and courage. He has shown that he can do the right thing and his caucus can do the right thing. We owe gratitude to Premier Harris for the steps he has taken in bringing this bill forward quickly and through this House tonight.

I want to thank my leader, Dalton McGuinty, who has shown leadership on this issue, who has committed to this issue and who was committed fully, even before the court decision, to bring this issue forward in the Legislature had he become Premier of Ontario.

Tonight is an opportunity as well to thank, and some have been, past members and current members of the Legislature who played a significant role in bringing this to the stage today. The Honourable Ian Scott, the Honourable Marion Boyd and George Smitherman are among others who have fought over the years in this House to get us to the stage we're at tonight.

This debate and the tone of this debate tonight have shown that this province has come a long way and that the province is and has been more than ready to accept the bill we're ready to pass here this evening. As has been said earlier, the passage of this bill tonight is not a credit or a tribute to any of us in this Legislature but really is a tribute to the courageous men and women who, over the years, have risked everything—personal safety, jobs and family—to fight for where we are tonight. Those are the real heroes, and those are the individuals who should be thanked tonight for getting us to this stage. If it weren't for those efforts, we wouldn't be here tonight talking about the bill. If it weren't for those efforts, we'd still be a province that had two classes of citizens. That will change tonight.

There's been a lot of debate on this type of legislation in the last few years in this province and across this country. One of the things that for me was the most moving in all this was a letter I received a couple of days ago from two constituents of mine, two gentlemen; one was 87 years old, one was 84. They have lived in a same-

sex relationship for 52 years, a caring, loving, committed relationship.

They owned a small business in their working life, they paid their taxes, they obeyed the law, they contributed to their community, they care and have cared deeply about each other and they share absolutely everything in their lives. They express in the letter how it has felt over the last 52 years not to be able to fully participate in all of Ontario, to understand and to know that they could not do certain things in their lives that their neighbours and friends and family members could do, because of lack of legislation, because of discrimination—things like inheritance rights, to be able to ensure that there was a survivor benefit if they needed it, to have full rights and the full ability to make decisions if one of them is ill and can't make them on their own—the simple things that most people take for granted.

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Who can argue with a 52-year, committed, loving relationship of two individuals in their late 80s? In the type of life they've led and the example they set for our community, they truly are role models for everyone in this province. They're the type of individuals that we can pay honour and tribute to tonight by passing this legislation in front of us.

This issue is not one of rights only; it is one of rights and responsibilities. The community clearly understands that those two come equally. People across this province have to understand that it simply is not asking and asking and not giving anything back. In this legislation there clearly will be the responsibility for gay and lesbian couples to support each other, to care for each other and to ensure that all aspects of Ontario life are shared equally across this province for every single individual.

This bill is truly doing what is right. It is not a question of partisan politics here tonight. It is not a question of doing charity or doing anybody any favours. These are fundamental rights that we owe to every single Ontarian and tonight we can address this.

I would say the majority of Ontarians support what we're doing here tonight, but I understand that there are those across this province who may have difficulty with this bill. What I say to those folks is, ask yourself tonight or tomorrow, if you had a son or daughter who was gay or lesbian, would you want this Legislature to pass this bill? Would you want us to treat your son or daughter equally? Would you want us to treat that individual with the same dignity and respect that every Ontarian deserves and needs to be treated with? I believe the answer is yes.

Although this is bringing us a long way, as I said earlier, there is still a long way to go. One must only look to the United States and to the recent murder of Matthew Shepard to understand that there's still a long way to go in ensuring that legislation and laws and attitudes fully protect every single Ontarian. But tonight is a step in the right direction.

I'm proud to stand here and support this bill along with Dalton McGuinty, my leader, and my caucus. I'm proud of the actions of the Legislature. In my view,

tonight will be one of the proudest moments in the history of this Legislature and one we can build on and work on, and ensure that every single Ontarian is treated with dignity and respect.

Once again, thank you to those heroes who have risked everything over the years to get us here tonight.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): There are a number of members of the Legislature here tonight and I think that is only proper, because this is a historic occasion. This is something that in my view should have happened five years ago. Unfortunately, it didn't, but I guess you could say that we have a chance tonight to recognize a mistake was made and to repair the mistake that was made.

In saying that this should have become law five years ago, I want to recognize someone who is in the gallery tonight who may have already been recognized but deserves to be recognized again, Marion Boyd, who had the courage and the foresight and the dedication and devotion to move this agenda forward in a way which meant that it has occupied the stage, meant that more and more people across this province—and, I would argue, across this country—recognized that our laws had to change. I want to give credit to Marion Boyd for moving the pulse of public opinion, for having the courage and the dedication and the foresight to lead, to take a step forward and then have the public follow in behind. The public, as we know from political opinion research, has come in behind. As we know from the title of this legislation, the Supreme Court of Canada has recognized what Marion Boyd recognized five years ago, only now they recognize it in a legal sense rather than in a political sense. We are here tonight to do the politically right thing and to recognize the direction that has been given by the Supreme Court of Canada.

I hope this is the beginning of greater and further recognition of equality in this province. I hope this is one more piece in the puzzle where we recognize that in a society, in a community, we are not all the same, that we will never all be the same, but that we all need to be equal and we need to be recognized as being equal. I hope that later on in this session, for example, we will see legislation which will recognize equality for disabled people, because that is another step that needs to be taken.

I want to applaud all the members of the Legislature. I had a chance to watch some of the debate tonight and to listen to some of the debate. I want to applaud people for the non-partisan way in which this debate has been presented. I want to give recognition to the Attorney General for bringing this bill forward early in this government's timetable. I am aware that he is under some time restraints, some time limitations, as they might be. But he has come forward very early and he has come forward in a way which deals with a number of issues and doesn't create a situation where issues are dealt with piecemeal. I think he deserves credit for that.

Let me say that I think there should be a celebration following the passing of this legislation. There should be

a celebration recognizing yet one more piece in the puzzle of equality. This will say something better; this will be on the better side of the human spirit in Ontario. I hope, as I say, that this will open the doors for yet other and greater recognition of equality across this province.

As I understand it, we are to decide on this issue at 9 o'clock. There is a to be a vote held at 9 o'clock. Is that correct? Yes. So I want to contain my remarks somewhat.

Other jurisdictions in this country, British Columbia, for example, have passed this legislation earlier. I look forward to seeing in other provinces very soon this legislation presented to legislatures. I look forward to the public debate. I look forward to the change of the law across the country, because this sends a signal about the maturity of our society, about our sense of what equality truly means, our sense that we are unique individuals. We are not all the same, yet we need to recognize the inherent equality that all of us should share and must share as citizens of this province and as members of this society.

Let me say thank you again to Marion Boyd for leading public opinion, for leading legal opinion and for allowing the rest of society to fall in behind. We owe you a debt, Marion.

Let me say to the Attorney General, thank you for dealing with this issue and bringing this issue to the Legislature so that virtually all of the issues are dealt with and we don't have to go over these issues piece-meal, piece by piece. I think you have done the right thing. I imagine that you may have had a discussion or two with your cabinet colleagues about this. I congratulate you for having won, at least so it would appear, those discussions, or at least for now coming out on top of those discussions. My congratulations to the two of you. My congratulations to all who are here tonight for the excellent way this debate has been put forward.

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Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): I stand to speak in favour of this very important and historic bill, and I do so with a great deal of pride and perhaps just a hint of regret. The hint of regret stems from how this government is presenting this legislation to the greater Ontario public.

The government has gone out of its way to say that it is doing this because the Supreme Court of Canada has forced it to do so. In fact, the government has gone beyond what the Supreme Court has ordered and it should take pride in that fact. We should all be proud of this bill because quite simply it is the right thing to do.

Liberals support this bill because Liberals oppose discrimination. In particular, the members of my party believe that government-sponsored discrimination must come to an end. We believe that people living in common-law same-sex relationships should have the same rights and the same responsibilities as people living in common-law opposite-sex relationships. We stand for fairness.

I am proud that I took this stand as I sought the leadership of my party, I am proud that our caucus subsequently adopted this stand and I am enormously proud of

our candidates who ran for us across this province during the course of the recent election who also took this stand. I will be proud to stand and vote in favour of this bill, as will the members of my caucus.

To be perfectly frank, our own history on this issue has not always been a proud one. It's no secret that my own view has evolved, as society's view has evolved. Some have asked what influenced my thinking. I can tell you it was not the Supreme Court, it was not the polls and it was surely not the pundits. It was simply people. People have influenced my thinking, parents in particular, and families. I have had the opportunity to speak to many parents and many families and they have told me that they do not believe their sons and their daughters, their brothers and their sisters or their partners should be stigmatized or simply disadvantaged because of their sexual orientation.

Times have changed, and fortunately they are doing so for the better. We all have friends and relatives, peers and colleagues who are openly gay. Can any of us today in positions of leadership truly believe that Ontario's gays and lesbians are not entitled to the same protections and obligations afforded by law to the rest of us? After all, we here in this House are the lawmakers, and as lawmakers we have a special obligation to ensure the laws that we make apply equally to all Ontarians, not because the Supreme Court of Canada demands it but because our very first obligation to the people of this province surely requires us to do what is right.

This is more than a simple matter of legislative house-keeping. It's historic and in keeping with the finest traditions and the finest moments of this Legislature.

In 1944, the Racial Discrimination Act was passed in this very building. In 1962, this chamber witnessed passage of the Ontario Human Rights Code. In 1986, the code was amended to prohibit discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation. At that time, the members of this House were subjected to all kinds of pressure; some of it was ugly and much of it was cowardly. There were unsigned letters sent to the media and whisper campaigns conducted in the hallways just outside this chamber. But in the end this Legislature did the right thing.

At that time, one of the most principled and gifted people to ever stand in this House stood to make a speech. I know that he has already been quoted this evening, but I think his words bear repetition.

This is what Ian Scott, a Liberal, and at that time the Attorney General of Ontario, said in this chamber on November 25, 1986, just a month shy of exactly 13 years ago:

"It is not a question of giving privileges, extra rights or special status, and it never was. It was always a question of inviting those who provide services to examine whether, on an individual basis, the applicant should be entitled to that service."

"In this country, one can reject a man for a job if he is incompetent but not if he is black. One can reject people

for housing if they are noisy or do not pay their bills but not because they are Jews. What we say today is that it is now time to take the next step."

That step was then taken. This evening, once again, it's time to take the next one, not to give anyone special privileges, not to give anyone special rights, not to accord to any individual Ontarian extraordinary status, but simply to give all Ontarians equality under our law. That is the right thing to do.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Further debate?

Mr Flaherty has moved second reading of Bill 5. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? It is carried.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs, Government House Leader): Mr Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to call this bill for third reading.

The Deputy Speaker: Consent for moving this bill to third reading. Is it agreed? It is agreed.

**AMENDMENTS BECAUSE OF THE
SUPREME COURT OF CANADA DECISION
IN M. v. H. ACT, 1999**

**LOI DE 1999 MODIFIANT DES LOIS
EN RAISON DE LA DÉCISION
DE LA COUR SUPRÈME DU CANADA
DANS L'ARRÊT M. c. H.**

Mr Flaherty moved third reading of the following bill: Bill 5, An Act to amend certain statutes because of the Supreme Court of Canada decision in M. v. H. / Projet de loi 5, Loi modifiant certaines lois en raison de la décision de la Cour suprême du Canada dans l'arrêt M. c. H.

Hon Jim Flaherty (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): I thank all members for their kind comments this evening during the debate and for their thoughtful deliberations. For those who didn't make kind comments, that's OK. I'm not bitter. I do thank the leader of the third party, who is a former Attorney General, for his kind remarks, and it is good to see former Attorney General Marion Boyd in the gallery.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Questions or comments? Further debate?

Mr Flaherty has moved third reading of Bill 5.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs, Government House Leader): Mr Speaker, I move adjournment of the House.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? It is carried.

This House stands adjourned until 1:30 o'clock tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 2051.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon / L'hon Hilary M. Weston

Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Gary Carr

Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers

Clerk Assistant / Greffière adjointe: Deborah Deller

Clerks at the Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Algoma-Manitoulin	Brown, Michael A. (L)	Halton	Chudleigh, Ted (PC)
Barrie-Simcoe-Brampton	Tascona, Joseph N. (PC)	Hamilton East / -Est	Agostino, Dominic (L)
Beaches-East York	Larkin, Frances (ND)	Hamilton Mountain	Bountrogianni, Marie (L)
Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale	Gill, Raminder (PC)	Hamilton West / -Ouest	Christopherson, David (ND)
Brampton Centre / -Centre	Spina, Joseph (PC)	Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington	Dombrowsky, Leona (L)
Brampton West-Mississauga / Brampton-Ouest-Mississauga	Clement, Hon / L'hon Tony (PC) Minister of the Environment, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre de l'Environnement, ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement	Huron-Bruce	Johns, Hon / L'hon Helen (PC) Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, minister responsible for seniors and women / ministre des Affaires civiques, de la Culture et des Loisirs, ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées et à la Condition féminine
Brant	Levac, Dave (L)	Kenora-Rainy River	Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Broadview-Greenwood	Churley, Marilyn (ND)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Gerretsen, John (L)
Bruce-Grey	Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Kitchener Centre / -Centre	Wettlaufer, Wayne (PC)
Burlington	Jackson, Hon / L'hon Cameron (PC) Minister of Tourism / ministre du Tourisme	Kitchener-Waterloo	Witmer, Hon / L'hon Elizabeth (PC) Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	Beaubien, Marcel (PC)
Carleton-Gloucester	Coburn, Brian (PC)	Lanark-Carleton	Sterling, Hon / L'hon Norman W. (PC) Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, government House leader / ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales, leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Chatham-Kent Essex	Hoy, Pat (L)	Leeds-Grenville	Runciman, Hon / L'hon Robert W. (PC) Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations / ministre de la Consommation et du Commerce
Davenport	Ruprecht, Tony (L)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Cunningham, Hon / L'hon Dianne (PC) Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Don Valley East / -Est	Caplan, David (L)	London West / -Ouest	Wood, Bob (PC)
Don Valley West / -Ouest	Turnbull, Hon / L'hon David (PC) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports	London-Fanshawe	Mazzilli, Frank (PC)
Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey	Tilson, David (PC)	Markham	Tsubouchi, Hon / L'hon David H. (PC) Solicitor General / solliciteur général
Durham	O'Toole, John R. (PC)	Mississauga Centre / -Centre	Sampson, Hon / L'hon Rob (PC) Minister of Correctional Services / ministre des Services correctionnels
Eglinton-Lawrence	Colle, Mike (L)	Mississauga East / -Est	DeFaria, Carl (PC)
Elgin-Middlesex-London	Peters, Steve (L)	Mississauga South / -Sud	Marland, Hon / L'hon Margaret (PC) Minister without Portfolio (Children) / ministre sans portefeuille (Enfance)
Erie-Lincoln	Hudak, Hon / L'hon Tim (PC) Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines		
Essex	Crozier, Bruce (L)		
Etobicoke Centre / -Centre	Stockwell, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC) Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail		
Etobicoke North / -Nord	Hastings, John (PC)		
Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Kells, Morley (PC)		
Glengarry-Prescott-Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)		
Guelph-Wellington	Elliott, Brenda (PC)		
Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant	Barrett, Toby (PC)		
Haliburton-Victoria-Brock	Hodgson, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC) Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / président du Conseil de gestion		

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Mississauga West / -Ouest	Snobelen, Hon / L'hon John (PC) Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles	Scarborough Centre / -Centre	Mushinski, Marilyn (PC)
Nepean-Carleton	Baird, Hon / L'hon John R. (PC) Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones	Scarborough East / -Est	Gilchrist, Steve (PC)
Niagara Centre / -Centre	Kormos, Peter (ND)	Scarborough Southwest / -Sud-Ouest	Newman, Dan (PC)
Niagara Falls	Maves, Bart (PC)	Scarborough-Agincourt	Phillips, Gerry (L)
Nickel Belt	Martel, Shelley (ND)	Scarborough-Rouge River	Curling, Alvin (L)
Nipissing	Harris, Hon / L'hon Michael D. (PC) Premier and President of the Executive Council / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif	Simcoe North / -Nord	Dunlop, Garfield (PC)
Northumberland	Galt, Doug (PC)	Simcoe-Grey	Wilson, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Minister of Energy, Science and Technology / ministre de l'Énergie, des Sciences et de la Technologie
Oak Ridges	Klees, Hon / L'hon Frank (PC) Minister without Portfolio / ministre sans portefeuille	St Catharines	Bradley, James J. (L)
Oakville	Carr, Hon / L'hon Gary (PC) Speaker / Président	St Paul's	Bryant, Michael (L)
Oshawa	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Stoney Creek	Clark, Brad (PC)
Ottawa Centre / -Centre	Patten, Richard (L)	Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh	Cleary, John C. (L)
Ottawa South / -Sud	McGuinty, Dalton (L) Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition	Sudbury	Bartolucci, Rick (L)
Ottawa West-Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest-Nepcan	Guzzo, Garry J. (PC)	Thornhill	Molinari, Tina R. (PC)
Ottawa-Vanier	Boyer, Claudette (L)	Thunder Bay-Atikokan	McLeod, Lyn (L)
Oxford	Hardeman, Hon / L'hon Ernie (PC) Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales	Thunder Bay-Superior North / -Nord	Gravelle, Michael (L)
Parkdale-High Park	Kennedy, Gerard (L)	Timiskaming-Cochrane	Ramsay, David (L)
Parry Sound-Muskoka	Eves, Hon / L'hon Ernie L. (PC) Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance / vice-premier ministre, ministre des Finances	Timmins-James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	Bisson, Gilles (ND)
Perth-Middlesex	Johnson, Bert (PC)	Toronto Centre-Rosedale / Toronto-Centre-Rosedale	Smitherman, George (L)
Peterborough	Stewart, R. Gary (PC)	Trinity-Spadina	Marchese, Rosario (ND)
Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge	Ecker, Hon / L'hon Janet (PC) Minister of Education / ministre de l'Éducation	Vaughan-King-Aurora	Palladini, Hon / L'hon Al (PC) Minister of Economic Development and Trade / ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Prince Edward-Hastings	Parsons, Ernie (L)	Waterloo-Wellington	Arrott, Ted (PC)
Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	Conway, Sean G. (L)	Wentworth-Burlington	Skarica, Toni (PC)
Sarnia-Lambton	Di Cocco, Caroline (L)	Whitby-Ajax	Flaherty, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Sault Ste Marie	Martin, Tony (ND)	Willowdale	Young, David (PC)
		Windsor West / -Ouest	Pupatello, Sandra (L)
		Windsor-St Clair	Duncan, Dwight (L)
		York Centre / -Centre	Kwinter, Monte (L)
		York North / -Nord	Munro, Julia (PC)
		York South-Weston / York-Sud-Weston	Cordiano, Joseph (L)
		York West / -Ouest	Sergio, Mario (L)

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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No.6

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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

First Session, 37th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 37^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 28 October 1999

Jeudi 28 octobre 1999

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 28 October 1999

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 28 octobre 1999

The House met at 1330.

Prayers.

ESTIMATES

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I have a message from the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor signed by her own hand.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The Lieutenant Governor transmits estimates of certain sums required for the services of the province for the year ending 31 March 2000 and recommends them to the Legislative Assembly.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ARMENIAN PARLIAMENT TRAGEDY

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): Yesterday, the world was horrified to learn that gunmen had stormed the Armenian Parliament in Yerevan. Eight prominent Armenian leaders were brutally murdered, including Prime Minister Sarkissian. In addition, the former ambassador to Canada and current finance minister was among 50 people held hostage.

Arising out of the ashes of the former Soviet Union, Armenia is well on the way to becoming a free-market democracy. Trade and relations between Canada and Armenia are continuing to improve. In fact, just last month the Armenian foreign minister was warmly received here in Toronto.

Yesterday's tragic events are a blow to the entire region. The Armenian people, however, are remarkably resilient, having lived through a genocide and later brutal repression.

We should all be reminded of the often terrible price paid for freedom and democracy. I am encouraged that President Kocharyan has been able to defuse the situation and prevent further bloodshed.

On behalf of all of the residents of Don Valley East, I'd like to take this opportunity to express our shock and sadness. Our condolences and prayers go out to the families of the victims. I have spoken with members of the Armenian community in my riding, who've expressed a sense of loss but also optimism that Armenia will continue to rise above this tragedy and forge a bright future.

ANNIVERSARY OF HUNGARIAN REVOLUTION

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): First, welcome to the grade 10 students from E. L. Crossley Secondary School in Pelham.

Earlier this week, I brought to the House's attention that this was the 43rd anniversary of the Hungarian revolution. I'm sure all of us have read and others of us can recall that beginning October 20, 1956, on university campuses across Hungary, students began to gather and develop petitions and a program to achieve freedom in Hungary.

These students were joined by workers as they commenced their movement across Hungary, and the Hungarian people joined with them in their cry for a free press, for individual rights, for a democracy, for a multi-party system and the right to choose a government of their own choice.

Indeed, their success climaxed with the declaration of a reformed government, led by a converted Imre Nagy. Well, it didn't last long, because soon Russian tanks rumbled into Budapest and other parts of Hungary, and notwithstanding the incredible courage and idealism and sense of sacrifice of those—essentially it was young people and workers—notwithstanding that they were able to cheer Caszlo Bessenyi as he was escorted back to the palace; notwithstanding that and because of, in no small part, the silence and the refusal of western powers to lend support when support could have made a significant difference, that spirited, courageous revolution, that blow for freedom was snuffed out by the brutal force of Soviet tanks, and western powers turned away.

So let us today, on this 43rd anniversary, praise the courage and idealism of those Hungarian people and condemn the western powers' refusal to lend aid.

Last Saturday, I was proud to join Hungarian Canadians and Hungarians at Toronto's City Hall at a flag raising: Bishop Attila Mikloszay, a bishop of Roman Catholic Hungarians living abroad; Maria Wittner, a freedom fighter with many decades of imprisonment; along with Agnes Somorjai.

I was proud to join them, and I'm sure we all will be proud to join with Hungarians and Hungarian Canadians in this commemoration of the 43rd anniversary.

WILLIAM OSLER HEALTH CENTRE

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke North): On October 26, I had the distinct pleasure of attending the launch of the new corporate identity of the Etobicoke General

Hospital, renamed the William Osler Health Centre. In attendance was William Osler's great-grandnephew Daniel, who resides in Etobicoke.

The William Osler Health Centre is home to 663 patient beds, serving some 15,000 patients in ambulatory care and assisting in over 160,000 emergency visits annually. Inspired by the spirit of its legendary namesake, the centre seeks to carry on in his tradition as a medical visionary, educator, researcher and compassionate provider of health care.

William Osler is a significant figure in the medical history and tradition of Ontario and Canada. During the second half of the 19th century and into the early part of the 20th century, Osler was the most renowned physician in the world and is still one of the most respected figures in the history of medicine.

Osler was born at Bond Head and rose from obscurity to become a great medical teacher and writer in three countries. At McGill, America's Johns Hopkins University and as a regius professor at Oxford, Osler was deeply admired by two generations of medical students and practitioners, for whom he came to personify the ideal doctor. He believed that medicine was learned at the bedside, not in the classroom. He was the first educator to bring medical students into a hospital environment.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. The members will know I am going to give a little bit, particularly for new members, on statements. But I will say that once the new members have all been through, we will try to stick as best we can to the time for members' statements. I do understand, though, there will be a little bit of leeway in the early going for new members, who may not quite be able to judge the time appropriately.

PREMIER OF ONTARIO

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): The good people of Sudbury are gearing up for another round of the cotton candy express. That's right, there will be a lot of hot air but little substance when the Premier slithers into my riding tonight with his hands out, spewing fuzzy platitudes in his attempt to fill his pockets.

After being so resoundingly rejected in Sudbury in the last election, you must admit it takes a lot of nerve, or rather a lot of greed, for him to show his face in our area. With the heightened arrogance that Ontarians have witnessed from our Premier, it's no surprise he has the gall to ask Sudburians for money. But let's not ignore the facts: This Premier has repeatedly turned his back on our needs.

After pushing his hospital restructuring at us, my community is expected to foot a \$20-million bill for capital construction. The Premier refuses to address our hospital system's multi-million dollar deficit. He doesn't even speak the language when confronted with phrases like "adequate funding" and "reasonable levels of service." He turns a deaf ear when he's about to hear a hospital horror story—all because our Premier is out of touch with the health care needs of the people of Sudbury.

Enough needless deaths. Enough service cuts. Enough layoffs. Enough doctor shortages. Enough of an inferior provincial health care system. We want this Premier to commit tonight to funding Sudbury's health care system immediately.

1340

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I don't believe the word "slither" is a parliamentary term or that it should be used in this House to describe the movement of any member or any colleague of mine. I would ask that he withdraw that.

Mr Bartolucci: Mr Speaker, if you rule that "slither" is out of order, I would say "crawl" into Sudbury; I would say "sneak" into Sudbury. I'd say a lot of things if "slither" is out of order.

Mr Wayne Wetlaufer (Kitchener Centre): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would echo my colleague from Perth-Middlesex. I consider that the terminology used by the member for Sudbury is certainly out of order. That member has been around this House long enough that he should know what is parliamentary language and what isn't parliamentary language. I would sure appreciate if you would rule, Mr Speaker.

Mr Bartolucci: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I believe it's only you who decides who is out of order in this House, not the members on the government side. We know they're out of order.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): In my rulings, I use a general rule of thumb. As you know, there are no specific words that are used. It was my feeling that words used out on the street—if you walk up to a person and say a particular word to them, if that's offensive to them, it will be the same in this House. There are some other words, as you know, that we do not use in here, such as "liar" and so on.

That is the general guideline I will use. I would expect all members to try to be as polite as possible in here. I will not rule against that particular word.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Brampton): I rise today to thank the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care for coming to Barrie on Monday to open a brand new 120-bed long-term-care facility. Woods Park Care Centre is one of the first centres built to the province's new design criteria and to use new design and program features to meet the special needs of Alzheimer patients. Woods Park is identified as one of the six centres that will use new innovative approaches to caring for people with this devastating affliction.

Simcoe county will see another new 150-bed facility opening soon and another 224 long-term-care beds awarded in the near future. These beds are long overdue because neither of the two prior governments opened one single long-term-care bed in the 10 years they governed, a most shameful legacy.

Our government will invest \$1.2 billion for long-term care, the largest investment for long-term care in the

history of the province. This major commitment to our ever-growing seniors population will see more than 20,000 new long-term-care beds in the province and more than 13,000 beds rebuilt and refurbished. Our government inherited this shameful legacy of zero long-term-care beds in 10 years, but did something about it.

The first results of our long-term-care strategy are there for all to see in Barrie at Woods Park Care Centre. This facility shows that our government cares.

NATURAL GAS SUPPLIERS

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): I rise today to talk about the plight of thousands of Ontario homeowners who've been literally left out in the cold by unreliable natural gas dealers and their broken contracts and why this government is doing nothing to protect homeowners from these gas dealers that slither door to door.

As you know, with the deregulation of the natural gas industry, homeowners have been aggressively marketed to switch to other companies. Some of these companies have been unscrupulous, duping seniors and others with deceptive methods like getting them to sign their names to contracts disguised as rebates. The main benefit of signing with these new providers, they were told, is to lock into current prices for the next five years. If natural gas prices go up, then the homeowners can save.

But you know what's happened? Now the natural gas prices have soared, we find out some of these contracts are worthless. Two dealers in particular, Priority Gas Marketing and Ontario Natural Gas Savings, are not honouring contracts to 20,000 Ontarians. This is shameful. These homeowners now have no choice but to pay a premium to continue to get natural gas to heat their homes.

What is the government doing? You know what they are doing? Zero. This government pretends that this is not happening. Meanwhile, people are paying higher premiums and contracts are not being honoured. Where is the government?

HOMELESS SHELTER

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Southwest): I am here to tell you about an injustice in my riding of Scarborough Southwest. Last night, the city of Toronto decided to override the wishes of an entire community. The city has told the community of Birchcliff that they will move 70 residents from Seaton House into a former nursing home directly across the street from Birch Cliff Public School.

The city has blindsided my community. Not once has the city approached the neighbourhood to consult with them about this project. In the words of one local councillor, "If you want a model of how not to place shelter accommodation across the city, this is the model." The city is not seeking the input of the very people this most directly affects. The city has just hosted one meeting regarding this issue, attended by over 1,000 people.

In the words of city staff, they said they were there to "clear up any misunderstandings."

I believe it is the city that has misunderstood. They should have had a full round of community consultations. Instead, the city is having a community lecture series and so far there has only been one lecture.

I call on the city to respect the wishes of my constituents in the neighbourhood of Birchcliff, and the only way to do this is to have full and open dialogue with the residents of the Birchcliff community. I ask the city of Toronto to take your earplugs out and your blinders off. I ask you to have real, meaningful, open and public dialogue. I ask the city, what are they afraid of?

ROAD MAINTENANCE

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): As winter approaches all across the province, I want to put the Minister of Transportation on notice today that we are very concerned about further anticipated cuts to winter road maintenance operations on the province's roads and highways.

As you'll know, four years ago this government changed the rules on when the work crews were to be sent out to clear our roads. Since then we've seen a frightening decline in winter road maintenance, resulting in hazardous driving conditions far too often and a sharp increase in the frequency of highway closures. As bad as that is, we have now learned that there may be a further decline in service for the winter of 1999-2000, something we can simply not afford.

As a result of this government's relentless desire to privatize this vital public service, the ministry has sold off much of its snow removal equipment—at fire sale prices, I might add—that will mean it may be unprepared for a severe winter.

In this drive to privatize, the ministry has laid off hundreds of employees only to be forced to hire many of them back on contract when the new system didn't work; all this in the name of cost-cutting, not public safety—cuts in cost that nobody in the ministry can confirm despite insisting the savings are there.

In the Thunder Bay district, this commitment to privatize road maintenance continues despite the fact that tenders to private contractors have come back at three to four times the ministry's own cost.

The people of this province deserve safe roads on which to drive, particularly in the winter. Public safety should be the priority, not privatization or phantom savings.

HALLOWEEN

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): As we all know, this coming Sunday is Halloween. Many young ghosts, goblins and ghouls will be coming to our doors seeking treats. While Halloween is one of the most anticipated nights on our children's calendars, we should all work to ensure that it is a safe occasion for everyone in the province.

In my riding and all across Brampton, Block Parents and the Rogers Pumpkin Patrol will be keeping a vigilant eye on our young trick-or-treaters to ensure that in spite of all the ghosts and goblins, this evening remains fun for all.

In order to improve safety on this ghostly night, I would like to offer just a few reminders to parents. Please ensure that children wear non-flammable, bright-coloured with reflective tape. For better vision, children should wear face paint instead of masks.

1350

Secondly, we should also remind our children that under no circumstances should they enter a stranger's home. As drivers, we should take the extra time to slow down and be extra cautious when we're returning to our homes. It is very important that we also keep a lookout for any suspicious behaviour in our neighbourhoods, immediately reporting it to police.

Finally, we should clearly explain to all our children that before they consume any of the goodies they receive, they should have it thoroughly inspected by an adult.

By taking a few simple precautions, we can help to ensure that all our children have a truly safe and happy Halloween.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I rise pursuant to standing order 36(a) and a ruling by Mr Speaker Turner some time ago. I noted yesterday the Premier's schedule indicated he was in Queen's Park while question period was going on. I note today he's got time for developers in Sudbury but not time to answer questions in the Legislature. If we're going to be able to fulfill our obligations—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. The member will know that is not a point of order.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Member for Sudbury, come to order, please.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Yesterday, Premier Harris referred to his Minister of the Environment in these terms: "It would be inappropriate to intervene in any quasi-judicial body, and I would insist that members of the executive council not do that." Clearly, the Premier is expressing no confidence in his minister, and I have to say neither do we have confidence. Therefore, before we proceed with question period, it would be imperative that the Premier come in and answer these questions and that they not be left to a minister in whom even the Premier doesn't have any confidence.

The Speaker: The member will know that's not a point of order.

Mr Duncan: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The Leader of the Opposition asked those questions yesterday.

The Speaker: That was not a point of order.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The leader for the third party should know not to take the Premier so far out of context

as to make conclusions that are totally false and misleading, and I withdraw that last comment.

ORAL QUESTIONS

OAK RIDGES MORaine

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Minister of the Environment. Yesterday, Minister, you stood in your place, mustering as much indignation as you possibly could, and told this House that you did not interfere in a matter before the OMB. You said the matter wasn't even before the OMB at the time of your letter. Well, here are the facts:

The OMB file regarding a development on the Oak Ridges moraine was opened on June 22 under file number 0990092. On August 26, you sent your letter siding with developers who want to build on the moraine to Durham region. On September 7, in their letter of reply, the region said, "Thank you for your letter regarding OMB file number 0990092."

Minister, those are the facts. Will you please stand in this House and apologize now for allowing your arrogance to get in the way of the facts.

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of the Environment, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I certainly stand by my comments yesterday. I believe the honourable member has Hansard as well available to him, where I stated quite categorically that the matter that I was concerned about was not subject to the Ontario Municipal Board, was not a component of the OMB hearing. I stand by that, and I defy the honourable Leader of the Opposition to stand in his place today and say that the class environmental assessment issue which was the subject of my letter was before the OMB.

Mr McGuinty: Let me recite the facts again: You sent a letter to Durham region. It was regarding a matter before the OMB. You're not allowed to do that. Now you claim that it had nothing to do with the matter before the OMB. This is what the recipient of your letter writes back to you. They say: "Thank you for your letter regarding the above-noted application, OMB file number 0990092." You know that this was about this matter; the Durham region knows that this was about the very same matter before the OMB; the people of this province know it was about a matter before the OMB. Don't wait for the weekend. Give us all a break. Resign right now.

Hon Mr Clement: Let me again correct the record. I find that the honourable member and I have a symbiotic relationship: He muddies up the record and I have to correct it. I did not write my letter to the OMB. I did not write any letter on any issue before the OMB. I did not write to the OMB.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. I caution the members that I cannot hear the minister's reply. I know

that occasionally there will be questions that get emotions up on all sides. But as I have said on many occasions, if I cannot hear the minister reply or the question asked, I will stand until order comes.

Hon Mr Clement: Once again, I did not write a letter to the OMB. I did not write a letter on any issue before the OMB. I did not write a letter in any way which interfered with the OMB. Perhaps I can further help the honourable member. He is obviously one letter behind in correspondence. I have a letter that was written by Roger Anderson, the regional chair, dated yesterday and I want to read it into the record.

Interjections.

Hon Mr Clement: The honourable members are laughing about this but they're the ones who raised the issue of what Roger Anderson thinks or felt or heard. He says: "I have discussed questions raised to me by the media with my commissioner of planning, Alex Georgieff, and I asked Mr Georgieff directly if he felt influenced by this letter. Mr Georgieff's opinion was similar to mine in that there was no direction implied or perceived by us in regard to this letter." I read that into the record. It speaks for itself.

Mr McGuinty: Minister, you are not allowed to go anywhere near a matter that's before the OMB. You know what the mayor of Uxbridge said? She said, "I was flabbergasted when I saw a copy of that letter. I think it's highly unethical." There is no doubt whatsoever that what you did here, you are not allowed to do.

1400

There was a matter before the Ontario Municipal Board. There was an appeal launched by a developer. It had to do with your ministry. You intervened. You sent a letter on behalf of the developer. The recipient of the letter said: "Yeah, I know what the hell you're talking about. You're talking about that file that's before the OMB." You're not allowed to do that. Give us all a break, Minister. The fix is in; it's over for you; it's done. Don't wait for the weekend. Resign.

Hon Mr Clement: Fortunately for the people of Ontario, he doesn't get to decide who is a member of the executive council. The voters made that decision on June 3.

I will further correct the record on behalf of the honourable member, who has difficulty getting it right. I did not write a letter to the OMB. I did not write a letter on any topic before the OMB. I wrote about the class environmental assessment. I wrote a letter which in no way interfered with the matter at hand with the OMB.

May I say this for the record? This is the opening week of the 37th Parliament. The honourable Leader of the Opposition is spending his time on baseless allegations and innuendo. I believe the people of Ontario deserve better, this chamber deserves better, and I encourage him to stick to the issues that are important to the people of Ontario. That is the agenda of this government.

The Speaker: New question; the member for Eglinton-Lawrence.

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): I think the public has a right to know why you, as the Minister of the Environment, would interfere on the side of a developer, basically to support an application that was totally opposed by all the local residents, by Uxbridge town council, by Durham and region planning committee; why you, as the Minister of the Environment, who is supposed to protect the environment, would come in and suggest a loophole of how to get around the environmental assessment. What were your motives for getting into this application?

Hon Mr Clement: I thank the honourable member for his consideration of this issue. Perhaps he didn't hear what I said to the honourable Leader of the Opposition. Let me repeat to him: The letter in no way dealt with any topic before the OMB. It dealt with a class EA and my protection of the law on behalf of the people of Ontario and my ministry.

I would say to the honourable member, if he or any other member of his caucus has such a concern about the integrity of myself or my government or any other member on this side of the House, there was a simple thing they could have done: reported it to the Integrity Commissioner, and then the Integrity Commissioner could have a say.

I find it quite interesting that the honourable members opposite spend more time worrying about this in this chamber. If they have a concern about integrity, there is a process. I dare you to take advantage of that process.

Mr Colle: The good people of Uxbridge and Durham region know that this letter talked about sewer capacity. The minister was suggesting how to get around the sewer capacity problem with the EA. That is why the minister's letter is referred to over and over again in a planning report from Durham region planning committee that was filed the other night. His letter is an integral part of their planning report. Basically, they say you can't reopen the environmental assessment process, because if you allow that hookup to the big pipe, you're going to destroy the Oak Ridges moraine. For him to stand there and say there's no connection between his letter on the EA loophole and the letter to Roger Anderson is a complete untruth.

Hon Mr Clement: The honourable member used to be a municipal politician. He realizes that in fact the decision of whether this is within or without the class EA resides with the municipality. If they considered my letter, bully for them. They made a decision. I'm quite willing to accept that decision. It is part of the public record, always has been—for at least the last month and a half—and they considered it. That's all they had to do, and the issue is now closed.

Mr Colle: I, like many members in this Legislature, have been on local council. To my recollection or my colleagues', we can never remember a minister sending a letter to a chairman of a municipal body when an item was before the OMB—unheard of, unprecedented.

If you look at it, do you know what your motives probably are? From 1995 to 1998 Jay-M Holdings gave

15,000 bucks to your party. That's what your motives are. I wonder, how many thousands did they give to your party in 1999? Would you put that on the record? How many more thousands did they give to your party in 1999? We've got the record: From 1995 to 1998, they gave \$15,000. How many more thousands did they give in 1999? Would you place it on the record for us to see?

Hon Mr Clement: This is the first occasion that I've had knowledge of that figure, and I thank him for that information. It certainly is news to me. I'd invite the honourable member to put his party's finances in front of the public record. I think there are a few developers who might have written a few cheques for the Ontario Liberal Party, if he wants to lower himself to that kind of public debate.

I would say to the honourable member that he perhaps misspoke himself in one capacity. He said the matter was before the OMB. The matter to which I wrote was not before the OMB. I encourage the honourable member to read my letter closely, and then he can learn that in fact it had to do with a class environmental assessment, which is within my purview as the Minister of the Environment. I encourage the honourable member, if he has a problem with that, there is an Integrity Commissioner and we can all learn together.

The Speaker: New question. Leader of the third party.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): It would come as no surprise that my question is also for the Minister of the Environment. Yesterday the Premier said, "It would be inappropriate to intervene in any quasi-judicial body, and I would insist that members of the executive council not do that."

You can quibble here about this part of the issue was before the OMB and that part wasn't yet before the OMB. The fact of the matter is, we know the issue. The issue is: Your developer friend wants to move ahead with development on the Oak Ridges moraine. The municipal council in that region doesn't want it. They want to protect the groundwater and the water supply.

It's also pretty clear what your letter was intended to do. Your letter was intended to send a signal to Durham council: "Give the developer what he wants. Give my developer friend what he wants." Your own Premier says that's inappropriate. Will you do the proper thing now and resign?

Hon Mr Clement: The answer to the question of course is no. But I am interested to know that the honourable leader of the third party has changed his tune from October 26, when he told a reporter that he agrees that the letter is not proof of anything illegal, so clearly the honourable member has changed his mind.

Perhaps I can help the honourable member in understanding the facts here. The Premier is quite right: If there was any interference with a tribunal, that is an obvious case for any member of the executive council to resign. The good news that I would like to share with him is the fact that in no way was my letter part of the issue before the board. It was in no way to do with an item

before that board; it had to do with a class environmental assessment. It was a letter from one politician to another politician saying: "Here's the law. I expect that you will abide by it in the way that you see fit. Let me know how you intend to do so." I see nothing wrong with that. If the honourable member has a problem with that, there is a process through the Integrity Commissioner by which he can seek further advice.

Mr Hampton: You want to confuse the issue. If I thought you had done something illegal, I would say the police should simply come in and arrest you. The problem is that what you have done is improper for a cabinet minister. For you to say, "Well, it was just one letter from one politician to another," again misses the point.

You are a minister of the crown. It is inappropriate for a minister of the crown, when this issue, this file, the concerns of Jay-M Holdings and the region of Durham, is before the Ontario Municipal Board, to send a signal to the council that they should change their position, that they should get in line with the developer. Look, you were only cc'd on the letter from the developer; it wasn't even a direct letter to you. But you went out of your way to send a signal to Durham council, to send a signal to those municipal officials, that they should change their position and get in line with your political friend, your contributor. Cabinet ministers aren't allowed to do that. Recognize that you've broken the rules. Resign.

Hon Mr Clement: I again suggest to the honourable member that he stick to the facts in the letter and the circumstances of the letter, which have been factually explained in this House already. The letter in no way deals with a matter before the board. It's absolutely explicitly dealing with the class EA, which is under my purview. It in no way suggests, "Follow a certain course of action." It says: "Here's the law. I expect you to apply the law." I make no apologies for that.

If the honourable member sees a problem there that perhaps we cannot see on this side, there is a process. But the very recipient of the letter has now said, in writing, that it in no way was seen as undue influence, it in no way affected their judgment and it in no way affected the course of their deliberations even outside of the OMB. So I encourage the honourable member to come straight with this House. If he has a new piece of information, please share it with us, because this piece of information has already been discussed and the issue now is before us. I would hazard a guess to say that there are other public policy issues that we should probably turn our minds to in this chamber.

1410

Mr Hampton: What we know now and what you are struggling so hard to avoid is the fact that this whole matter is before the OMB. You can say, "This part of the issue isn't now before the OMB, and the other part of the issue is before the OMB, and I was writing about the other part that isn't before the OMB." Look, that's strictly avoidance.

You know that the regional council of Durham is a sophisticated and knowledgeable council. They know the

rules. What you were trying to do in sending them a letter was to say, "Get in line with the developer." The municipality understood that. That's why they wrote back to you and said to you that this matter is before the OMB. That's why they were so outraged. For you to get a letter now from someone at the municipal council after you're in hot water over this simply falls more in line with your whole course of conduct.

Minister, you intended to send a signal to the municipal council in Durham region. The signal was, "Get in line with my developer friend"—

The Speaker: Order.

Minister of the Environment.

Hon Mr Clement: Again, I did not write a letter to the OMB. I did not write any letter on any issue before the OMB. I did not write a letter which in any way interfered with the OMB. If those facts were different, perhaps he and I would agree, but they're not different. I encourage the honourable member to look at the facts and not pursue this line of questioning any further.

ONTARIO DISABILITY SUPPORT PROGRAM

Ms Marilyn Churley (Broadview-Greenwood): I have a question for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Yesterday we asked if you were aware that disabled people receiving ODSP benefits had received a letter telling them that their benefits had been cut, but in fact it was a mistake as a result of your botched implementation of the transition to ODSP. You know the story now. People were being told that they might have to go and pick up their own cheques.

Today we find out that the understaffed ODSP office has been working hard on this and is trying to find a solution and perhaps courier some of those cheques out. Hopefully this will work. But yesterday, when I asked you this question, we were astounded by your lack of understanding, your lack of listening and your unwillingness to even admit there might be a problem.

My question to you today is, are you willing to admit that there is a problem, and what are you going to do about it?

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs): Meeting the needs of people with disabilities is a priority for this government and certainly a priority of mine as minister. Client service is also important.

When I was first elected four years ago, people were having to wait up to two years to get their case adjudicated. For our government, that was, simply put, unacceptable.

We are in the process of establishing the ODSP and establishing minimal, equitable transportation expenses. This will mean that thousands of people who didn't have access will now have access to services.

In dealing with this issue, approximately 100 people of the more than 200,000 clients of the Ontario disability support program had a potential problem. We were

concerned that these people should be made aware of the situation immediately, so we informed them. Working with our officials, I have been assured that they will be releasing all ODSP cheques on time.

Ms Churley: Minister, you've more than astounded me today. You seem to be saying even if it's only 100 disabled people cut off, who cares, it's OK. But we were made to understand yesterday it could be thousands. One is too many.

You get up and give a history of what you're trying to do with ODSP. The reality is that you botched the implementation of this. There are going to be more and more of these problems down the road. Your government found millions of dollars to pay Andersen Consulting to cut people off benefits, and you can't find the money to invest properly in this transition.

The issue today is that we want a guarantee that every one of those people, whether it be 100 or 1,000 or 3,000, will get their cheques on time tomorrow and that you will fix the implementation and invest the money and the resources that you need to address these problems. Will you guarantee today—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Minister.

Hon Mr Baird: I can guarantee today that people in Ontario who are recipients of the Ontario disability support program will get a much better program than they were getting when the member was in government. When the NDP ran the show, there were people having to wait up to two years for adjudication. Simply put, that was unacceptable. That's why we established the Ontario disability support program, a support program about which even the member opposite said, and I quote: "The minister and members of the government caucus will know that I and my caucus have supported the implementation of this plan." That was her colleague the member for Beaches-East York.

AIR QUALITY

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): A question for the Minister of the Environment—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Member for Beaches-East York, come to order, please.

Mr Bradley: We have had an alarming revelation from a report released today by the Ontario Clean Air Alliance that Ontario Power Generation, previously known as Ontario Hydro, intends to violate its commitment to cap its nitrogen oxide emissions next year at 38 kilotonnes. If the utility's plan to thumb its nose at this commitment is allowed by the Harris government, its coal-fired generating stations will spew into the Ontario air shed 5% to 13% more smog and acid-rain-producing nitrogen oxide as well as toxic air pollution, including the nerve toxin mercury and six cancer-causing substances such as arsenic and lead.

Minister, will you give a clear and specific commitment that you will not allow Ontario Power Generation to

weasel out of its obligations to cap its smog-producing emissions, as it promised just eight short years ago?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of the Environment, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I thank the honourable member for the question. One of the issues we're grappling with is that when that voluntary commitment had been made by Ontario Hydro, as it then was, in 1991, the nuclear stations, as the honourable member well knows, were on-line. We've had a situation where for safety reasons and management reasons the nuclear stations are now off-line. I think the member is aware of the fact that as a result of that, in order to meet the power needs of the province, both industrial and for our homes, there was a need to fire up the coal-fired generators to an extent that none of us are happy with. It's something we have to live with in the short term, but we want to migrate away from the dirty coal-fired plants as soon as possible.

This is a transboundary issue as well, as the honourable member knows, that cannot be solved just within Ontario's borders. Some 50% of our smog comes from across the border, from the United States plants and power generators.

Certainly his advice and the Ontario Clean Air Alliance's advice on how to proceed to get to a true solution are very much appreciated.

Mr Bradley: If the minister intends to bless any manoeuvre by Ontario Power Generation to weasel out of this pollution-reducing commitment, he'll be responsible for permitting an already critical smog situation in Ontario to get worse.

Rather than engaging in his now famous word games to protect the major polluter in the province, and that's what Ontario Power Generation is, the minister should give the people of Ontario a solemn, specific and unequivocal assurance that he will not allow Ontario Power Generation to dodge its obligation to cap nitrogen oxide pollution levels. The minister must not give a green light to the utility to contribute to any increase in the already unacceptable number of premature deaths a year in Ontario, 1,800, caused by air pollution by hiding behind the excuses they have, or a discredited emission trading scheme that will result in more smog, more pollution, more respiratory problems and more deaths.

Instead of apologizing and making excuses for the company, will you require them to meet that obligation unequivocally?

Hon Mr Clement: I think we are working with the generators, and the expectation is that they will meet the 38,000-kiloton cap. The issue, though, is that we have a pilot trading program in place.

Mr Bradley: It's discredited.

Hon Mr Clement: You know, the thing about this program, if I may say so, is that as a result of the trading, they can reduce emissions that would alternatively blow over into Ontario. If you're trading with a partner that it is in Ohio or Michigan or New Jersey or New York, the impact is that if you reduce those emissions, they reduce

the amount of smog that does blow into Ontario. So I wouldn't write it off yet.

But we are committed, as part of our anti-smog action plan to reduce the amount of smog by 25% in the first instance, and that's five years, and by 45% over the next 15 years. That is a commitment of the government of Ontario, I can assure the honourable member.

1420

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr Wayne Wettsauer (Kitchener Centre): I have a question for the Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

You recently were in southwestern Ontario, I think it was about two weeks ago, and you were saluting small businesses, which are, as a matter fact, Ontario's number one job creators. You are aware, I'm sure, of the tremendous success of small businesses in my riding. They are creating jobs by the thousands, contributing to an unemployment rate of 4.9%, one of the best in Canada.

I have watched many of these small businesses become large businesses through perseverance and hard work, often overcoming many obstacles over the past 20 years; businesses like M & M Meat Shops, Automated Tooling Systems, Kuntz Electroplating and many others. However, in speaking to a number of small business owners and budding entrepreneurs, I find that in the face of mounting pressures and global competition, they need to know more information on what services your ministry offers to help small businesses expand and succeed.

Could you please give me some information that I can pass on to small business owners in my riding?

Hon Al Palladini (Minister of Economic Development and Trade): I certainly want to thank the honourable member from Kitchener Centre for the question.

Small businesses do play a vital role in marketing Ontario and making it competitive in the global marketplace. Our mission is to continue to help Ontario small businesses grow. Our ministry has established a number of programs and services to help small businesses grow, including help offices, small business enterprise centres, international market development and also the Young Entrepreneurs Program.

Mr Speaker, if you would indulge me with about five more minutes, I could probably tell you a whole bunch more.

Our ministry also wants to help Ontario small businesses export. International trade is vital to Ontario's economic health and that's why our Ontario Exports Inc has adopted a more aggressive focus on enhancing and taking advantage of export opportunities. We have a dedicated team of market specialists, working directly with companies to help them get ready to export. They can do everything from identifying capital projects and exporting opportunities, to organizing in-country initiatives.

I would encourage all small business owners interested in exporting to call Ontario Exports Inc, 1-877-468-7233.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Supplementary.

Mr Wetlaufer: Thank you, Minister. Ontario is obviously doing our part in helping small businesses to expand. Expansion of export opportunities seems to be one of the successful message being employed.

As you are aware, there was a federal Liberal throne speech a few weeks ago. While there was much in it about increased spending, there was precious little about tax decreases or assistance to small business owners. Nor has the Ontario Liberal Party made any suggestions to their federal cousins about helping small business owners. In fact, the small business contacts in my riding advise me that the provincial Liberals have been very quiet on any matter of importance to small business owners and their employees.

Please, Minister, could you share with the members of this House what we as a government are doing to ensure that Ontario's number one job creators have the tools they need to succeed?

Hon Mr Palladini: Certainly I would like to mention to my colleague that I could probably take the rest of question period to share with you all the things that we have done.

Our plan to help small businesses grow include cutting taxes, eliminating red tape and removing barriers to growth. We have cut taxes 69 times in the last four years. We will continue to cut taxes 30 additional times to keep Ontario growing.

Our 30% personal income tax cut has certainly helped to fuel the economic growth that we are experiencing in the province of Ontario. Our last budget proposed a further 20% cut in the personal income tax.

We're also cutting small business corporate rate taxes in half. We've removed barriers in thousands of pieces of legislation so that business can grow. These initiatives will directly boost hiring and expansion.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Palladini: We've challenged the federal government, your buddies, to follow our example. If I had one wish—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. New question.

OAK RIDGES MORAINE

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): A question for the Minister of the Environment: Minister, when you sent your letter to Durham region, they replied on September 7, and in their re line they said, "Re OMB file number 099092." They put you on notice that it was their very clear understanding that you were writing to them about a matter that was before the OMB. That was about a month and a half ago.

Now tell us, did you upon receiving this letter, immediately and without hesitation, contact Durham region and

make it perfectly clear to them that this had nothing to do with the OMB, notwithstanding their understanding that it had everything to do with the OMB?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of the Environment, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): Let me again state for the record that the letter pertained to the class environmental assessment. If the honourable member has evidence or has an assertion that can be based in fact that the class EA was part of the OMB hearing, I'm willing to stand in this place here and be corrected on that fact. But I think the honourable member knows that it was not part of the OMB hearing; in fact, it was excluded from the OMB hearing.

If the honourable member has any new evidence I encourage him to either place it before us in the House or place it before the Integrity Commissioner, and we can continue this discussion there so that we can use the time in this House to talk about the issues that Ontarians care about: how to advance growth and prosperity; how to advance tax cuts; how to ensure our health care and education are there for future generations. That is the discussion that we're quite willing to proceed upon.

Mr McGuinty: Minister, the planning department for Durham recently submitted a commissioner's report to the planning committee, and in that report that they sent to the OMB they make specific reference to your letter. Your letter is now a part of the OMB record. It's part of the documentation being considered by the OMB. When you sent the letter to Durham region they specifically acknowledged that it was in connection with an OMB hearing. Your letter now forms part of the OMB record.

It seems to me that this matter is very straightforward: You've interfered with the OMB—strike one; you haven't stood up for the environment—strike two; and you've ignored the facts in this Legislature—strike three. Even in Mike Harris's government, three strikes and you're out. Minister, do the right thing and resign.

Hon Mr Clement: I think the honourable member is learning from the Atlanta Braves rather than the New York Yankees, I dare say, on the issue of baseball.

I say to him that the issue before the OMB was not the issue that I wrote about. In fact, I know of cases in my constituency work—I'm sure we all know cases—where we write a letter to a concerned citizen group or to a municipal politician about a particular issue and it ends up being part of a file that eventually goes either to litigation or goes before a quasi-judicial—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Will the member take his seat. Order. Minister of the Environment.

Hon Mr Clement: This is a common occurrence. As elected representatives, people use our letters in ways that—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Minister of the Environment.

Hon Mr Clement: Mr Speaker, if he has a problem with that, how other people use my letter as part of the public record, that's a situation that he can bring up with the Integrity Commissioner.

This House has debated very important issues over time. It has debated issues relating to the Great Depression. It has debated issues relating to war. I encourage the honourable member, if he has a problem, to take it to the Integrity Commissioner, and we can get this issue off the plate so we can discuss the issues that both he and this government were elected to discuss. I'd be happy to venture into that discussion on environmental issues or municipal issues.

1430

ONTARIO LABOUR RELATIONS BOARD

Mr Bob Wood (London West): My question is to the Minister of Labour. As he knows, the Occupational Health and Safety Act gives workers the right to refuse or stop work which they believe is unsafe. This is a very important part of our employment law, yet some think it is being undermined by abuse in the form of the occasional frivolous and vexatious complaint.

Will the minister consider changing the Labour Relations Act to permit the Labour Relations Board and arbitrators appointed under the act to impose sanctions where they find abuse of these provisions?

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): I myself haven't heard about this specific complaint from employers. Employers have not come to me and complained specifically about this particular practice. Obviously, if it's an issue out there and you're hearing complaints about it, I have no difficulty in looking into the issue and determining whether it is an issue that I think would cause problems within the workplace in Ontario.

Having said that, it's not something that I've heard about. I'm interested in hearing from you further about this. If there's a problem with respect to this specific issue, I'll be happy to deal with it.

Mr Wood: I can give the minister the assurance that there are some out there who do feel this is a problem. I wonder when the minister might have the opportunity to consider this matter and tell us whether action may be taken.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Obviously this is an issue that is very close to your position. At this point in time, we're reviewing the particular piece of legislation. I expect there will be some modifications and changes to it within the next year. I'll be happy to get back to you and look into this issue and deal with it and maybe amend certain parts of the legislation if we deem it to be acceptable, but I can't believe that we'll be back before this House within 12 months. It's going to take at least that long to consult and report back.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): New question, the member for Parkdale-High Park.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): On a point of order: It's the NDP.

The Speaker: I missed the rotation. The member for Hamilton West, I apologize.

Mr Christopherson: We tend to watch those things. Thank you, Speaker.

PARAMEDICS

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): My question is to the Minister of Health. You must be aware of the growing crisis surrounding your continuing refusal to remove nine words from your ministry's Ambulance Act that have the effect of treating paramedics differently than other emergency response workers like police and firefighters and in fact has resulted in the firing of six highly skilled, extensively trained, experienced paramedics, two of them from my hometown of Hamilton.

You will also know that these paramedics are being put in a position where if you do nothing, they will have no choice but to follow the very letter of the traffic laws as they exist. If that happens, you will be directly responsible for putting the lives of Ontarians at risk.

Will you commit today to removing these nine unjust, offensive words from this legislation?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): First of all, the individuals concerned, as you know, did have an opportunity this past week to meet with the Ministry of Health staff and some of my own staff regarding this issue. Also, we have accepted the recommendations of the land ambulance task force. I can assure you we are quite prepared to carefully look at their concerns and I hope we can arrive at a solution that will be satisfactory to everybody.

Mr Christopherson: Minister, that does nothing. The reality is that you've already had this kind of review done. In fact, in August 1998 you received the review of the ambulance regulation report by the Land Ambulance Transition Task Force, and in that report they make a specific recommendation that those nine words be removed.

I would remind you that that task force comprised, yes, OPSEU representing the workers there, but also the employers through the Ambulance Service Alliance of Ontario, as well as municipal politicians, as well as your own ministry officials. They all agree. We all agree. Certainly the workers and their families agree. You're the only one who disagrees. Saying that you're going to put this off to a review is tantamount to saying no, and it's unacceptable.

Minister, stand in your place and say today that you will remove these unjust, offensive words that are costing paramedics their jobs.

Hon Mrs Witmer: To the member opposite, I already have accepted all of those recommendations.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): My question is to the Minister of Education. Today, I rise to ask you about your promotion of commercialism in the province's schools, in the classrooms. Your funding formula has reduced support to school programs. We saw that earlier this week in terms of special education. Parents everywhere are being forced to fundraise to a frazzle to get books and computers, and as a result,

Ontario school boards are entering into arrangements with Wal-Mart at 53 different schools, with Pepsi. One of the worst of these is the Youth News Network, a private company that is proposing for boards that they sell students time as a captive audience during the school day in return for equipment that the boards can't afford on their own. Meadowvale school has already signed up. There are other schools who are considering this.

Minister, so far, all you've done is shrug. Do you agree that Ontario students should be exploited for commercial gain and that their education should depend on schools being treated like charities, or are you going to do something about this?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education): I find it passing strange that the criticism from the opposition over there has been that somehow or other trustees don't have authority. In this case, trustees have clear authority. They're elected by the community to make decisions about whether they think this kind of partnership with the private sector is appropriate or not, and I respect their right to make that decision. I will support those trustees in whatever decision they decide to make.

Mr Kennedy: You took away the authority of trustees to raise money, and now they're being forced, by you and you alone, Minister, to turn to private commercial enterprises to fund themselves.

The board chair at Thames Valley, Pat Smith, said it's because of government cuts. The board chair in Toronto, Gail Nyberg, said it's because of the \$360 million that you're taking away. They're selling opportunities to the private sector as a direct result of your lack of commitment to public education.

You're setting a dangerous precedent by sitting glued to your chair and not being concerned with what's happening in Ontario schools. The Youth News Network has been turned down by four provincial education ministers who understand that it's not right to abuse the public trust, to do what parents don't want us to do in terms of taking away some of the school day and renting it to a private company.

Minister, are you going to continue to foster this climate of being dependent on corporate charity and on corporate exploitation, or are you going to bring in a policy to make sure that education can be paid for without the boards having to go begging or the kids being exploited?

Hon Mrs Ecker: As the honourable member well knows, the authority to make such decisions is with the trustees and the boards. As a matter of fact, the Toronto board has just established a very good policy in terms of giving guidance to their schools and their members about whether or not private sector partnerships, of whatever kind, are appropriate.

I'd also like to remind the honourable member that fundraising in schools is not new. This has gone under their administration, under the previous government's jurisdiction.

The other thing I should point out to the honourable member is that fundraising is something the parents can choose to do—

Interjections.

Hon Mrs Ecker: I know they don't want to hear this, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Member for Sudbury, come to order, please.

Hon Mrs Ecker: It's something that schools and parents can choose to do. People can choose to participate. I'm prepared to trust trustees in making this decision. I'd like to ask the honourable member, why doesn't he trust trustees to make this decision?

1440

LANDS FOR LIFE

Mrs Tina Molinari (Thornhill): Mr Speaker, as this is my first question in the Legislature, let me take this opportunity to congratulate you on your election as Speaker and also to thank and congratulate the member for Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey for the wonderful competition that he provided for this Legislature.

My question today is for the Minister of Natural Resources. Last March in Sudbury, after an unprecedented two years of extensive public consultation, the Premier made a historic announcement regarding the protection of crown lands. This historic Living Legacy strategy promised to protect 378 new parks and protected areas—the biggest expansion of parks and protected areas in the history of Ontario.

Minister, my question to you is, what measures has the government undertaken to implement the Living Legacy strategy to make these parks part of our heritage forever?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Natural Resources): It's indeed a pleasure to address the first question of the member for Thornhill, one that was put so well.

I was proud to join the Premier in Sudbury in March of this year, but no prouder than the thousands and thousands of Ontarians who participated in a historic public consultation for two years with Lands for Life and had a very real participation in the announcement of 378 new parks and protected areas for this province, almost six million acres protected for future generations.

I'm pleased to inform the member that my ministry takes very seriously the challenge of making this historic agreement a reality, and we are doing so with good speed. This week we announced a public consultation for 64 of the new park areas, and we'll work hard to adopt over 200 recommendations of the Lands for Life process.

Mrs Molinari: That's great news, and I'm glad to see that the government is keeping up its promise to protect these areas and continues to consult with the public.

In order to accomplish the protection of these 378 new parks, an agreement between the Ministry of Natural Resources, environmental groups and the forestry industry produced a historic partnership: the 1999 Ontario Forest Accord. The government has promised to establish a board to oversee and provide advice to this accord. Is

the Forest Accord Board implemented yet, and what will its role be?

Hon Mr Snobelen: Yes. As a matter of fact, a number of weeks ago I was in Quebec City to meet with the Canadian Council of Forest Ministers. I can tell you that on our coffee breaks and lunch breaks, the people who represent the forest industry and the governments across Canada were very interested in just how we brought about this unique accord in Ontario, the first time ever in Canada.

I was proud to tell them that in Ontario, under the strong leadership of Premier Mike Harris, we were able to find a common agreement between the Partnership for Public Lands, the forest industry and the Ministry of Natural Resources. We did that because the leaders of those organizations—leaders like Frank Dottori, Raymond Royer, John Riley and Monte Hummel, leaders of that magnitude—came together and found common ground in their concerns for people who depend on our resources and common ground in our mutual concern for future generations.

The accord is there; it's built. The Living Legacy trust board is up and running, and the Ontario forest accord, a very unique accord—the advisory board has been prepared and are working now.

BRONTE CREEK PROVINCIAL PARK

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): My question is to the Minister of the Environment. Minister, you now have an opportunity to save some valuable parkland in this province, and I look forward to you doing that.

Today we're aware of the fact that the Royal Canadian Golf Association is negotiating with this government to purchase 240 hectares of land in Bronte Creek Provincial Park to turn this into two 18-hole golf courses, a golf hall of fame, a hotel, a conference centre and commercial and residential development on Bronte Creek Provincial Park. They have discussed it publicly, and your government discussed this publicly.

This is an ecologically sensitive area. It is the only provincial park in an urban area in Ontario, and it's one of the largest green spaces in the greater Toronto area. Your government is considering selling off one third of Bronte Creek Provincial Park to the private sector for golf courses, hotels, residences and commercial developments.

Minister, you are responsible for protecting parkland and protecting the environment. Will you today stand up in the House and guarantee that you will stop any sale of Bronte Creek Provincial Park to anyone in the private sector?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of the Environment, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): Mr Speaker, I believe the protection of parklands is actually under the Ministry of Natural Resources.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Minister of Natural Resources.

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Natural Resources): I'm pleased to have the opportunity to address the question of the member opposite. In fact, I understand that the RCGA did meet with Frank Miller, who's the chair of the Ontario Parks Board of Directors, in April of this year and that Mr Miller, someone who has great experience with the parks in the province, suggested that their proposal be explored. After that date, I did meet with some of the members of the RCGA and explained to them the process in the province, which is a very lengthy process, I might add, to have park amendments that would be required for this sort of thing. It's in their ballpark, and I'm not sure what they're doing with their proposal.

Mr Agostino: It's obvious that your government is negotiating and considering the possibility of selling one third of Bronte Creek Provincial Park to the private sector for development. There's nothing sacred with your government.

This is almost a done deal. Your Minister of Tourism said: "This is a premier site. It's exactly what we need right here." That came from your Minister of Tourism. So your cabinet minister, on behalf of your government, already has committed to this site.

Stephen Ross, the executive director of the Royal Canadian Golf Association, said: "The Ontario government's long-term plan is to use this for something more than a park. We think it would be perfect for a golf course."

It is obvious you're negotiating. It is obvious you're willing to sell this park to the private sector. I cannot believe the arrogance of your government that thinks you can simply give away parkland to build golf courses, to build buildings, residential properties, commercial properties and hotels.

Minister, will you stand up today on behalf of parklands in this province and commit that you will cease all negotiations and guarantee you will not be selling any part of Bronte Creek Provincial Park to the private sector?

Hon Mr Snobelen: It must be Thursday, because obviously the member wasn't listening to my earlier comments. We are not in negotiation with the RCGA. I have told them what would be required, and what's required in Ontario is a very extensive public consultation on how a park is used that meets local needs.

Mr Agostino: Just say you're not going to do it. Just say no.

The Speaker: The member for Hamilton-East has asked his question. Allow the minister to reply, please. Minister of Natural Resources.

Hon Mr Snobelen: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I'm pleased again to have the opportunity to do that.

Here is what we will do: We will not change a policy, we will not alter from a policy. We will make sure this is in the public domain. That's our job.

I remind the member opposite that this is a government that's known for adding parkland, not selling parkland.

OTTAWA SENATORS

Mr Brian Coburn (Carleton-Gloucester): This is my first time commenting in the House, Mr Speaker, and I offer my congratulations on your recent election. Over the last couple of days, I think you're more than up to the job.

My question is to the Minister of Finance. A growing number of my constituents in Carleton-Gloucester have contacted my office with respect to the fate of the Ottawa Senators. We have a great number of hockey fans in the Ottawa area. The Ottawa Senators have generated a huge following. One of the problems facing the senators is property taxes paid by the Corel Centre in Ottawa. Some of those taxes are paid to the city of Kanata, some to the regional municipality of Ottawa-Carleton and some are paid to the province. Minister, can you help the Ottawa Senators stay in Ottawa?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): We have today corresponded with the regional chair of Ottawa-Carleton, with the mayor of Toronto, with the NHL, with Mr Manley, the federal minister of industry, and with the National Hockey League as well as the National Hockey League Players Association.

We have indicated that the government will be establishing a new professional sporting facility class, that municipalities will have the option of establishing a tax range of fairness from virtually zero all the way up to the current commercial rate.

We have indicated that the province is more than willing to be an absolute partner with those municipalities that choose to do that, and we will match them with a corresponding proportional tax exemption.

Mr Coburn: The Ottawa Senators are not only important to their sport and their fans; today in the Ottawa newspapers many presidents and CEOs of our high-tech industries have stressed how important the Ottawa Senators are to the business community. The Ottawa Senators bring recognition to our area of the province that helps our companies sell their products. The Ottawa Senators help our high-tech companies attract highly-skilled workers to their plants.

I am very happy with our government leading the fight to help the Senators stay in Ottawa. Do you know if our federal government or the municipal government or the NHL have stepped forward with anything other than talk to keep the Ottawa Senators in Ottawa?

Hon Mr Eves: The province's primary reason for doing this, of course, is that there are many other municipally-owned facilities that are exempt from tax because they are municipally-owned. We're trying to put all sporting facilities on a level playing field. Quite honestly, I think they now will be on a level playing field if the municipalities choose to opt in, and I certainly hope they will.

We have written Mr Manley asking him, now that the provinces and, hopefully, the municipalities have taken

this step—hopefully, the federal government will see fit to take a step as well. Perhaps if we all get together and try to resolve this issue, it can be resolved to the satisfaction of everyone and to the benefit of everyone. I would also hope, and I say this quite sincerely, that the NHL and the players' association will take a serious look at resolving some of their very real structural problems to address the problems of Ottawa and other NHL franchises.

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Health, and it concerns the northern health travel grant. The minister will know that many people who reside in northwestern Ontario, many patients, are often referred to specialist physicians in Winnipeg. It's far better to travel three or four hours into Winnipeg than to travel 24 hours to Toronto to see a specialist physician.

Recently, your ministry has started to disallow northern health travel grants where the specialist physician, though recognized as a specialist in Manitoba, is not recognized in Ontario. In other words, in Manitoba he is clearly recognized as a specialist, physicians who practice in northwestern Ontario recognize him or her as a specialist, but because he isn't recognized in Ontario, you are no longer allowing the northern health travel grant.

Minister, why are you doing this? Why are you forcing people to endure a 24-hour or longer trip to Toronto and very expensive hotel bills and other bills? Why won't you recognize the specialist physicians of Manitoba who are in fact very closely related to the patients?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): The process that is presently in place and the mechanism is the same as when you were in government. In fact, this was introduced by the Liberals. The only change that has occurred was a change that your government made in 1994; that was to tighten the criteria and require patients to access the specialist nearest to them. We have not made any changes to the process. As I say, they are the same as when they were introduced by the Liberals in 1985.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon Frank Klees (Minister without Portfolio): Mr Speaker, I would like to rise to give the order of business for next week.

On Monday, November 1, we will be dealing with Bill 7, the taxpayer protection act, in the afternoon. In the evening there will be further debate on the throne speech.

On Tuesday, November 2, Bill 7, the taxpayer protection act, will be debated in the afternoon. Again in the evening there will be the throne speech debate.

On Wednesday, November 3, in the afternoon there will be a Liberal opposition day. We will not be sitting on Wednesday evening.

On Thursday, November 4, will be the first two private members' public business items. Those are yet to be determined. In the afternoon we will be debating the taxpayer protection act, Bill 7, and not sitting on Thursday evening.

STANDING ORDERS REFORM

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Just before we get into petitions, I want to make the members aware of the changes as a result of the standing orders.

As you know, there will be some new procedures in place for petitions. Any member wishing to present a petition during routine proceedings must deliver the petition to the Clerk's office in room 104. Petitions may also be left at the table when the House is meeting. In either case, they will be examined by the Clerk and be returned to the member the next sitting day.

If the petition meets the requirements of the standing orders, the Clerk will attach a certificate to it with his signature and the petition may then be presented in the House. When it is presented, the certificate must be attached to the petition. If the petition does not meet the requirement of the standing orders, it will be returned with a notation explaining why it was not certified.

I will be vigilant in enforcing the new practice and will call to order any member attempting to present a petition that does not have the certificate attached to it. That will be beginning after today, on Monday.

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: In reference to the directions you just gave for the presentation of petitions, we get many petitions on exactly the same subject. Can we assume that once a petition has been approved and received its certificate, we can essentially keep the certificate to use for future petitions that are identical?

The Speaker: Under the rules, each of the petitions needs to be certified even though I understand there are occasions when some would be similar.

Mrs McLeod: If I may, it's not just occasions, Mr Speaker. I think the Clerk's table is about to be overwhelmed by having to provide certificates on each separate petition. I can present my petitions page by page. Sometimes they come in that way.

I just feel that we have perhaps inadvertently created a clerical burden that is really unnecessary. We're trying to meet the concern that these be valid signed petitions, but if it's the same petition, I hope there is not a lot of added work.

The Speaker: I respect the member's thoughts on this issue. Obviously, over the next little while we will monitor the situation and see what evolves. But I thank the member for her point of order.

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Sometimes petitions are very urgent and, consequently, if the petitions have to be handed to the Clerk at least 24 hours before, it might take away the urgency of the petition. Can we get a ruling on that, that

it may not be essential that the petition be submitted to the Clerk 24 hours before?

1500

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): On the same point of order, Mr Speaker: You will know that this change is a result of the negotiations that took place between the three House leaders. While I am not opposing directly or strongly at this point the details of what's being suggested by you and the Clerk's table, I would just like to point out that the agreement at the negotiating table was the principle that there would be this vetting to ensure that only petitions that are appropriate and fit the criteria would come before the House. But I'm not aware, and I've just checked with my Liberal counterpart, that there's been any further discussion with the House leaders about this, given the fact that this is where it stems from.

I would ask, Speaker, before you rule today, if you would allow us to follow the usual rules and give the House leaders an opportunity to review the process. I would just suggest to you respectfully that in making this ruling it certainly would be much easier for you if we sort of slugged out the details and agreed on something that certainly the Clerk would be comfortable with, rather than leave us in a position of having to oppose this because we weren't given the opportunity to have some input.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I notice the government whip is nodding yes. It was the agreement of the House leaders that we would discuss and negotiate this new process. The Clerk's office has not consulted us about this process and has put you, Mr Speaker, I think in an untenable position. This does not reflect the tenor of the discussions that were held at the House leaders' meeting. It was our very clear and unequivocal understanding that we would have a chance to negotiate that, and until such time—Mr Speaker, I am an elected member. I would like to be able to address the Chair without the Clerk's table interrupting.

The point is that we would like to have the opportunity, if the government is in concurrence, and I believe we had that agreement, that we would discuss this. I would hope in the future that these types of changes would be shared equally with all three parties before something like this is announced.

Hon Mr Klees: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Certainly that is my recollection of the arrangements, and I think it is appropriate that we have an opportunity to follow through on those arrangements before you are called upon to make a ruling on this matter.

The Speaker: I thank all the member for the points of order. As you know, if there is agreement by all House leaders on any issue, the members of this House will be able to proceed.

What I would suggest we do in light of the circumstances is that you will continue to have your meetings and discussions and advise me of any changes that you're able to agree upon. I wish you the best of luck in your

endeavours, similar to the other issues. If we can do that—and keep me posted of the results of those discussions—then obviously I will look to it at that time.

Mr Duncan: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: We will continue to use the process that was in place until then?

The Speaker: What I would suggest to the member—

Mr Christopherson: We can't have a petition period today.

The Speaker: No. I don't know how long the process will take. What I suggest is that we continue with that process. It was my suggestion originally that we begin this process on Monday. What I'm going to suggest is that we continue for today and maybe you could advise me if there are any changes or any agreement by next week.

PETITIONS

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the northern health travel grant was introduced in 1987 in recognition of the fact that northern Ontario residents are often forced to receive treatment outside their own communities because of the lack of available services; and

"Whereas the Ontario government acknowledged that the costs associated with that travel should not be fully borne by those residents and therefore that financial support should be provided by the Ontario government through the travel grant program; and

"Whereas travel, accommodation and other costs have escalated sharply since the program was first put in place, particularly in the area of air travel; and

"Whereas the Ontario government has provided funds so that southern Ontario patients needing care at the Northwestern Ontario Cancer Centre have all their expenses paid while receiving treatment in the north which creates a double standard for health care delivery in the province; and

"Whereas northern Ontario residents should not receive a different level of health care nor be discriminated against because of their geographic locations;

"Therefore we, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, petition the Ontario Legislature to acknowledge the unfairness and inadequacy of the northern health travel grant program and commit to a review of the program with a goal of providing 100% funding of the travel costs for residents needing care outside their communities until such time as that care is available in our communities."

I have petitions that have been signed by another 153 concerned constituents in my riding, and I have affixed my signature in full agreement with their concerns.

SCHOOL BOARD REVIEW

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned parents and ratepayers, request a financial review of the Avon Maitland District School Board's financial affairs."

I'll sign this so that it can be entered into the record.

HIGHWAY SAFETY

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, which I'd like to read to the House:

"Whereas 13 people died during the first seven months of 1999 on Highway 401 between London and Windsor; and

"Whereas traffic levels on all sections of Highway 401 continue to increase; and

"Whereas Canada's number one trade and travel route was designed in the 1950s for fewer vehicles and lighter trucks; and

"Whereas road funding is almost completely paid through vehicle permit and driving licence fees; and

"Whereas Ontario road users pay 28 cents per litre of tax on gasoline, adding up to \$2.7 billion in provincial gas taxes and over \$2.3 billion in federal gas taxes;

"We, the undersigned members of the Canadian Automobile Association and other residents of Ontario, respectfully request the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately upgrade Highway 401 to at least a six-lane highway with full paved shoulders and rumble strips; and

"We respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario place firm pressure on the federal government to invest its gasoline tax revenue in road safety improvements in Ontario."

I concur and I will affix my signature to it.

Mr Wayne Wetlaufer (Kitchener Centre): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario requesting the Legislative Assembly to upgrade Highway 401 to at least a six-lane highway with full paved shoulders and respectfully requesting that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario place firm pressure on the federal government to invest its gasoline tax revenue in road safety improvements in Ontario.

I will add my signature.

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): I too would like to present a petition, on behalf of the people in the Woodstock area, to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It is very much the same nature and in the same vein as the other petitions signed, that whereas 13 people died during the first seven months of 1999 on Highway 401 and whereas the traffic levels on Canada's number one trade and travel route—and the fund—we need to improve the situation.

I submit my signature to this petition as well, with respect.

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Brampton): I have a petition I wish to present to the Legislative

Assembly of Ontario. It has in excess of 40 signatures, and I'll read it:

"Whereas 13 people died during the first seven months of 1999 on Highway 401 between London and Windsor; and

"Whereas traffic levels on all sections of Highway 401 continue to increase; and

"Whereas Canada's number one trade and travel route was designed in the 1950s for fewer vehicles and lighter trucks; and

"Whereas road funding is almost completely paid through vehicle permit and driving licence fees; and

"Whereas Ontario road users pay 28 cents per litre of tax on gasoline, adding up to \$2.7 billion in provincial gas taxes and over \$2.3 billion in federal gas taxes;

"We, the undersigned members of the Canadian Automobile Association and other residents of Ontario, respectfully request the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately upgrade Highway 401 to at least a six-lane highway with full paved shoulders and rumble strips; and

"We respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario place firm pressure on the federal government to invest its gasoline tax revenue in road safety improvements in Ontario."

I affix my signature.

1510

EMERGENCY SERVICES

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I have a petition addressed to this assembly, signed not only by residents from my riding, Davenport, but also from the west end of Toronto. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the residents in the west end of Toronto no longer have emergency room service at the Humber River Regional Hospital, formerly known as Northwestern Hospital, the Keele Street site; and

"Whereas the west end of Toronto is the hardest-hit area for emergency restrictions in all of Toronto; and

"Whereas Premier Mike Harris and Minister of Health Elizabeth Witmer have promised changes to deliver a solution to the mess they initially created by closing hospitals; and

"Whereas it is not acceptable to Toronto residents that every one of the eight emergency room departments in the city's west end were closed on Monday, January 22, 1999;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, call on Premier Mike Harris and his government to immediately address the health care problems in the west end of Toronto by re-opening the emergency room at the Northwestern hospital, now known as the Humber River Regional Hospital's Keele Street site, and increase the number of in-patient hospital beds and keep its promise for interim long-term-care beds."

I am delighted to sign this document with my signature.

HIGHWAY SAFETY

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I too have a petition from the Canadian Automobile Association. I'll read part of it.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas 13 people died during the first seven months of 1999 on Highway 401 between London and Windsor; and

"Whereas traffic levels on all sections of Highway 401 continue to increase....

"We, the undersigned members of the Canadian Automobile Association and other residents of Ontario, respectfully request the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately upgrade Highway 401 to at least a six-lane highway with full paved shoulders and rumble strips; and

"We respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario place firm pressure on the federal government to invest its gasoline tax revenue in road safety improvements in Ontario."

I too will sign my name to that petition.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas Mike Harris is cutting the heart out of many communities by closing hundreds of neighbourhood and community schools across Ontario; and

"Whereas this massive number of school closings all at once will displace many children and put others on longer bus routes; and

"Whereas Mike Harris promised in 1995 not to cut classroom spending but has already cut at least \$1 billion from our schools and is now closing many classrooms completely; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario is pitting parent against parent and community against community in the fight to save local schools; and

"Whereas parents and students in the city of Toronto and many other communities across Ontario are calling on the government to stop closing so many of their schools;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We demand that the government of Ontario stop closing local schools."

Since I am in total agreement with this petition, I'm signing it as well.

PARAMEDICS

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): I have a petition to the Honourable Lieutenant Governor and the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Health this past spring amended O. Reg. 501/97 under the Ambulance

Act so that paramedics are considered no longer qualified to do their job if they accumulate a minimum of six demerit points on their driving record; and

"Whereas this amended regulation has resulted in at least one paramedic being fired from employment; and"—as I pointed out, that number is now six, two of them from Hamilton;

"Whereas the Ministry of Health's regulation is far more punitive and harsh than the Ministry of Transportation's, which monitors and enforces traffic safety through the Highway Traffic Act; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Transportation mails out a notice to drivers at six to nine demerit points and suspends a person's driver's licence at 15 points for a 30-day period; and

"Whereas none of the other emergency services in Ontario, for instance, fire and police services, are held to the same standard or punished so harshly; and

"Whereas this amended regulation is not needed since other sections of the Ambulance Act protect the public against unsafe driving and/or criminal behaviour by paramedics, specifically O. Reg. 501/97, part III, section 6, subsections 8, 9 and 10; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Health actions are blatantly unjust and punitive, and they discriminate against paramedics;

"Therefore we, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, beg leave to petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately eliminate any references to the accumulation of demerit points during employment from O. Reg. 501/97 under the Ambulance Act, specifically, part III, section 6, subsection 7, thereby allowing the Highway Traffic Act to apply to paramedics; and

"To order the immediate reinstatement of paramedics who have been unjustly fired under this regulation."

I continue to offer my support to these paramedics, as do all my caucus colleagues, and I sign my name to it.

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): I'm presenting a petition on behalf of my colleague the member for Haliburton-Victoria-Brock:

"Whereas this government has undertaken to reform the system of education funding to ensure fair funding for Ontario's children; and

"Whereas the Supreme Court of Canada has stated that the province could, if it so chose, pass legislation extending funding to denominational schools other than Roman Catholic schools without infringing the rights guaranteed Roman Catholic separate schools; and

"Whereas providing our children with an excellent education consistent with our culture and religious beliefs is a necessity and not a matter of preference; and

"Whereas independent schools successfully educate children across the entire spectrum of learning abilities and special needs; and

"Whereas all children of taxpaying Ontario parents deserve to have funding distributed in a manner that does not discriminate against those not using the public Catholic systems;

"Therefore we, the undersigned citizens and taxpayers of Ontario, respectfully request that the government take immediate steps to extend fair funding to all students of the province."

HIGHWAY SAFETY

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): I also have a petition similar to some others expressing concern over the carnage that's taking place on Highway 401 and reflecting on the inadequate design and maintenance and requesting that tax dollars be used to remedy this. This petition has been signed by my constituents from Belleville, Frankford and Quinte West. Being in complete agreement, I'm pleased to affix my signature to this.

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas 13 people died during the first seven months of 1999 on Highway 401 between London and Windsor; and

"Whereas traffic levels on all sections of Highway 401 continue to increase; and

"Whereas Canada's number one trade and travel route was designed in the 1950s for fewer vehicles and lighter trucks; and

"Whereas road funding is almost completely paid through vehicle permit and driving licence fees; and

"Whereas Ontario road users pay 28 cents per litre of tax on gasoline, adding up to \$2.7 billion in provincial gas taxes and over \$2.3 billion in federal gas taxes;

"We, the undersigned members of the Canadian Automobile Association and other residents of Ontario, respectfully request the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately upgrade Highway 401 to at least a six-lane highway with full paved shoulders and rumble strips; and

"We respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario place firm pressure on the federal government to invest its gasoline tax revenue in road safety improvements in Ontario."

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 27, 1999, on the amendment to the amendment to the motion for an address in reply to the speech of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor at the opening of the session.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): Further debate?

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): I rise today to speak to the throne speech. I hope it's not unparliamentary to introduce the House to Ms Susan Abramovitch, my wife, who's in the gallery over there—

Interjection: Much better half.

Mr Bryant: Much better half, and has as much to do with me being here as anybody else.

Like many of us in this chamber, I am the first member of a newly named, newly aligned riding, St Paul's. The name is based on the old parish name, as has become increasingly out of fashion. I can assure you that St Paul's is no homogeneous parish, notwithstanding that its name, perhaps ironically, is that of an apostle.

1520

St Paul's is a riding encompassing a number of ridings that we're all familiar with: St Andrew-St Patrick, Eglinton, Oakwood, Vaughan, a bit of Dovercourt. Past members have included Larry Grossman, Dianne Poole, Bill Saunderson, Ron Kanter, and of course Isabel Bassett is my direct. Ms Bassett brought a dignity to this office and to this chamber, as did all of my predecessors and I hope I will follow in the tradition that has been set by my most worthy predecessors, including the sitting member for Eglinton-Lawrence, Mike Colle, who set the standard for service while he was the MPP for Oakwood.

The riding itself includes some of Toronto's finest neighbourhoods: Forest Hill, Chaplin Estates, South Hill, Rathnelly, Moore Park—a bit of it—Briar Hill, Belgravia, Oakwood, Cedarvale, Humewood, south Broadway, south Eglinton, Hillcrest, Wychwood Park and Casa Loma. Its diversity, like all Toronto ridings, is extraordinary. As I said, St Paul's is no homogeneous parish; rather, it is home to some of Canada's largest and most famous synagogues, churches and temples. There are over a dozen languages spoken in the riding. It has the highest number of post-secondary degrees in the province, the most educated riding in Ontario. It has the second-highest number of tenants; 68% of the riding are renters, and they will expect me to continue as an uncompromising advocate of their rights, particularly at this time when there is really no rental market whatsoever in Toronto, thanks to the black hole that is the Tenant Protection Act.

That lament aside, this riding houses a who's who of Ontario's political, religious, social and community leaders. I can't name them all because I'll offend some, but I'll just name a few: Albert Wiggin, the proprietor of Albert's Real Jamaican, the best takeout maybe in Ontario and the winner of the Harry Jerome award for excellence. That's in the west end of the riding. In the east end are the likes of Robert Lantos and Brent Belzberg. The riding is home to the eminent Rabbi Gunther Plaut and political notables, the Right Honourable John Turner, senators Keith Davey and Jerry Grafstein and the Honourable David Smith. It is excellently represented by the member of Parliament, Carolyn Bennett and, I'm happy to say, home to Her Excellency the Lieutenant Governor, the Honourable Hilary Weston. All this and more is the great riding of St

Paul's, who have honoured me with their electoral choice, and I will endeavour over the next four years to fulfill that confidence that they have put in me.

Now I get to turn to the occasion at hand, the throne speech. Let me start with a parable. I'm stealing it from Chesterton and Forrester and I'm trying to update it. It's a parable about a lamppost in a public square. Some people in the public square want to tear it down and they turn to a rabbi who's personifying conviction and reason. They ask the rabbi about the means and the ends of taking it down and he starts in a very dry, scholastic style and begins by talking about the fundamentals. He says, "The lamppost has a light and if light is important"—the next thing you know, the rabbi is knocked down, the lamppost is knocked down in a rush, and everybody around the public square starts congratulating themselves for their most unmedieval, common sense practicality. But that's just the start of the trouble because some of those who tore down the lamppost did so because they wanted better light, some because they wanted new iron, some because they wanted darkness to hide their misdeeds. Some tore it down because they just wanted to smash public property. After a while it became clear to everyone that they ought to have listened to the rabbi in the first place, but now that which might have been debated by gaslight must be discussed in the dark.

The parable points to our present situation in Ontario. In this province there is a plurality of goals, a wide, divergent set of commitments and assumptions and no agreed set of criteria as to what government ends ought to be, let alone government means. This is obviously a very different situation than we had with the previous Tory government, the Bill Davis government. The debate was about means not about ends.

But now we wonder in this House whether or not we have any shared assumptions about what government ought to do. As Alistair MacIntyre has put it, "Modern politics has become civil war by another means." We just have very few shared assumptions in this House, if any.

I believe that Ontarians have a certain set of assumptions as to the way government ought to be run. But those assumptions, I'm afraid, are not shared by the writers of the throne speech. On the one hand, the throne speech contains a moment of epic artifice and contempt when it denies that the government is the government. It reads that those elected in 1995 and re-elected in 1999 to continue the revolution do not view themselves as government, but rather those who came to fix the government, hence the anti-government of Ontario.

On the other hand, notwithstanding this claim to be an anti-government, there are words in this throne speech which resemble less Ronald Reagan than Roy Romanow. The throne speech says that the government is there to afford important services to people, including accessible health care and quality education. The government of Ontario, the throne speech reads, has worked actively to make social programs more effective. The government's agenda is large and ambitious, says the throne speech.

Which is it to be? Is it Roy Romanow or is it Ronald Reagan? How does one square a Thatcherite philosophy with these words of hope? The answer, I fear, is that a Trojan horse has entered this House. It is a Trojan horse that speaks words of hope for those still believing in a just society and a good government, yet that government is being dismantled by the self-acclaimed anti-government. Thus will the neo-conservative Trojan horse succeed in its clandestine revolution. Some revolution. More like a coup d'état. Some Blueprint. True blue, yes, but don't bother reading the print.

Is this what the people of Ontario want from their lawmakers? Do they really want to permanently knock down the lamppost and knock out the light of the state? I don't think so. I believe that most Ontarians are beginning to see that there is a growing gap between the rich and the poor and that the middle class are stalled at best. I think that most Ontarians reject a revolution of benign neglect that gives us the working families without homes, the mentally ill without shelters, communities and hospitals without doctors and nurses, gridlocked traffic, death-trap highways, yet nothing about those matters in the throne speech, nothing at all.

There is, with all due respect, a paranoia within the anti-government. James Hillman talks about a paranoia within neo-conservative governments toward their very foundations. It leads to a paranoia that plagues the calling of politics and the health of a city. I don't share that paranoia in our foundations.

Let me return to Mr Chesterton's parable. The lamppost has been torn down and our state institutions today operate with little to no light. The anti-government would say it was torn down as a result of a common-sense mandate. Others would say it was torn down for a variety of impulses ranging from impatience to rejection.

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But as with the parable, there is no clear answer and as with the parable, here in Ontario we are debating our assumptions about government, about legislative means and ends. We are having this debate in the dark. The lamppost has been torn down without considering whether there was worth in the light of the state in the first place.

We in the Liberal opposition believe, and I will always trumpet this conviction, that we need the light of the state, that that light begets a more just society and that the light should never be torn down. Martin Luther King said, "It need not be ideological. The good and just society is neither the basis of capitalism nor the antithesis of socialism, but a socially conscious democracy that reconciles the truths of individualism and collectivism."

As with Thatcher's Britain in the late 1980s and early 1990s, we have a situation in Ontario today where we have to look closely at the effects of the Conservative experiment. The Thatcher experiment, of course, was to sell off 48 publicly owned agencies and departments, drastically scale down spending and play a game of politics of friends and enemies. Sound familiar? Well, it is familiar. The politics of friends and enemies has

infected the politics of Ontario and so now we have "real Ontarians," as was cited in the throne speech, and, I guess, the rest, which is a remarkable, Orwellian moment in the history of this province. All Ontarians are real, I suppose, but now some are more real than others.

The people of St Paul's will expect me to watch this government closely. That's my job. I stand here as a rookie member, of course, and a young one at that, I think maybe the youngest on this side of the House, but I stand with an unwavering conviction: my faith in the province, in the light of the state, not only to help the prosperous in their pursuit of success but also to shine a light on those in need. This conviction requires much labour and listening and learning, and I am aware of the limits of the efforts of the elected. But I stand here, dedicated to keeping this anti-government restless, dedicated to those who insist that we create disincentives for harmful and frivolous expenditures, yes, but above all, dedicated to those in my party and in my caucus who believe that the province is there to shed light on those in need of the light, and know that the only light can be shone from democratically accountable public institutions. I will not serve here simply to achieve market efficiency and give the last word to the bottom line. I will not do that. I will serve here as long as the people of St Paul's will let me, to ensure, again to use the words of Forrester, that "mercy and justice and grace have the last word and that truth triumph over falsehood."

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): First, I would like to congratulate the member from St Paul's and all other new members of this Legislature, congratulate him on his first remarks here in this Legislature. To all of those who have yet to speak, good luck in the coming days and months in this Legislature.

There's one point I want to pick up from the speech from the member from St Paul's. He talked about the growing gap between the rich and poor and about how the middle class was being squeezed. There was some very good work done last year by the Centre for Social Justice and the Ontario Federation of Labour that looked exactly at that issue. The two groups looked, specifically, at any number of indicators of wealth and used that in the Ontario context. They looked at what is the compensation for CEOs, particularly in 1996-97; what is the freeze that's been on for those at the minimum wage for the last four years under this government; what is family income now and what is middle-class income considered to be and how are people being pushed down? And they looked at a number of indicators that showed very clearly that under the policies of this government, there truly is a much broader gap between the rich and poor, with the middle class being squeezed down.

What is in the throne speech that will make it worse is the further 20% income tax reduction proposed by this government. Clearly, under the Harris income tax scheme, those at the top benefit even more and those at the bottom are getting clobbered because of all the new user fees that they must pay.

What is so interesting about the Liberal position is that this is the same group that supports the Mike Harris 30% tax cut and, I would assume, supports the Mike Harris further 20% tax cut. The same Liberal Party is frankly in bed with these folks over here when it comes to this issue. So when Liberals talk about the growing gap, I've got to say the Liberals are just as responsible for that growing gap because they agree with the tax cut that exacerbates that growing gap.

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey):

I'd like to congratulate the member for St Paul's on his presentation to the House. As far as the presentation was concerned, it was excellent. As far as content was concerned, I think it left much to be desired.

I listened very carefully to what he had to say. It was very similar to the leader of the third party when his presentation was made yesterday or a couple of days ago, a very similar sort of content. I guess he's free to do that. But he forgets one thing: There was an election that took place. I don't want to be so glib as to say we won and you lost—I'm not saying that—but I'm saying that our policies were very clear in that election, as they were in 1995, very clear as to where we stood. In 1995, every one of those promises we made, that were committed to, were followed by our party and this government, every last one of them. That's the reason, in my humble estimation, we were elected again. For one thing, we're the first government in eons that did exactly as they said they were going to do. Not only that; they liked it.

I would like to hear more from my friend from St Paul's as to the topic of tax cuts. It is difficult to tie his leader down as to where he stands; one day he says one thing and another day he says something else.

With respect to his friends in Ottawa—and that's most crucial, his cousins in Ottawa—we've been trying to get a commitment out of them with this surplus that they have to cut taxes. For some reason we're not able to persuade them to come to a commitment on that. Philosophically, the Liberal Party in Ontario is closer to them, certainly much closer than we are. I hope the member for St Paul's will be able to persuade his colleagues in the Liberal caucus to do just that: persuade the people in Ottawa to cut taxes.

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): It is with great pleasure that I rise to compliment my colleague the member for St Paul's on his presentation on the speech from the throne. I would say he has given us quite a wonderful lecture on the content of the speech from the throne. I have enjoyed especially his remarks to his own riding that he represents, and I'm sure that the people of St Paul's, recognizing his quality and his desire to represent them, have sent him to Queen's Park to do exactly that. I'm sure he will be doing that with zeal and with honour in representing those people, and I hope they will keep him here for many years to come.

In addressing the speech from the throne, he has touched perhaps on the heart of the issue. The speech from the throne was very long, with Her Honour reading for about an hour or so nothing more than the passé

rhetoric we have seen since 1995, in other documents in the last four years, but nothing is implemented from what's in that speech from the throne. Every day we have issues brought into this House by members on both sides, where the government keeps on saying: "We have done so much. We have set aside so many millions of dollars for this and for that." If that is indeed the case, where is the benefit of those millions when we have shortages all over the place and we have seen in the last couple of days the tremendous report on retirement homes?

I congratulate the member for St Paul's again on his presentation.

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Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Southwest): It's my pleasure to comment on the maiden speech put forward by the member for St Paul's. I want to congratulate him on his speech. I think we all remember our first time that we spoke in the House, and it's always a good memory.

I concur with the member for Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey on the issue of tax cuts and where the Liberal Party and the Liberal members stand on the issue of tax cuts, because I listened very attentively to what he said today in the House and there was no mention of being in favour of tax cuts or being against tax cuts. We know that in the last Parliament, the 36th Parliament of Ontario, we saw the Liberal Party vote against each and every tax cut brought forward by our government. In fact, the NDP did that as well.

We've introduced 99 tax cuts since 1995. I think it's important to contrast that with what we saw from the Liberals and NDP during their 10 years in office. We saw a total of 65 tax increases on the part of those two parties, and during the five years from 1990 to 1995 we saw a net job loss in this province of 10,000 jobs. Since 1995, since our party was elected by the people of Ontario, we have seen 572,000 net new jobs in our province, and I think that's directly a result of tax cuts. We have seen the benefits that tax cuts have had.

In the throne speech it talked about further income tax reductions of 20%. We know that income tax rates have dropped 30% in this province. We're now paying approximately 38.5% of the federal rate in provincial income tax, which is down from 58%. We're also going to see further reductions in the provincial portion of residential property tax.

I look forward to hearing where the member for St Paul's stands on tax cuts and where his leader, the leader of the Liberal Party, stands on tax cuts.

The Acting Speaker: Response?

Mr Bryant: Thank you for those comments, all of you.

The member for Nickel Belt reminds us all why the NDP are forever doomed to be the perennial opposition, wanting to turn back the clock to a time when things were better, but unwilling to deal with the realities of our marketplace, of our society and of the changes to our province. So what we heard from the NDP, what we heard from the member for Nickel Belt was more of the same. I hope we continue to hear more of the same and

we'll continue to see them as the perennial opposition party; they're very good at that.

As for the member for Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey, I'm glad to hear that you listened to my speech, but I don't think you did. I think it's representative of the government, the smug arrogance that goes with, "Look, we won and you lost." I am very aware of the direction in which the crown of the mace points. What I was talking about for 15 minutes, and maybe I should have made it shorter or maybe I should have said it over and over again, was that I do not believe that most Ontarians—not even the 45% that voted for the Tories—in fact voted for the tearing down of the lamppost, voted for the end of government as we know it, voted for a society where you take your tax cut and run and there is no role for the state any more.

We believe that there should be tax cuts in due course, and we've said it before and again, but I'm not going to stand here and say that my legacy as a member of provincial Parliament or the legacy of my party is going to be simply about tearing down. Congratulations to the Tories. Their legacy is tearing down hospitals, closing schools and widening the gap between the rich and poor. You can have it.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate? The member for Brant.

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton): Halton, the great county of Halton, the great riding of Halton.

It's a pleasure to stand here today, particularly in the new Legislature as it's been renovated. It's a marvellous feeling to stand here on the floor of the House. We call it the "new" Legislature but it has really been returned to the way it was in its original condition back in 1893, I believe, when the Legislature first opened. It's a particular pleasure to be back and to address the House on the speech from the throne.

I would also like to thank the people of Halton who showed such great faith and confidence in our government and in me personally. It is quite a humbling experience, I can tell you, to have 35,000 people place their faith and expectations on your shoulders. I can say to those people in Halton that I will try to fulfill my duties as best I can and to represent their views in this House and to fulfill the promises that this government made in the Blueprint document over the course of the election campaign.

Last week's speech from the throne addressed those expectations that the people of Ontario have placed in this government. Perhaps the most important aspect of that speech from the throne was that Ontarians can begin to count on an agenda that we have laid out, an agenda first unveiled during the election campaign last spring. The people of Ontario are beginning to believe in a government that will do what it says it is going to do.

It's interesting to look at the throne speeches from bygone eras, from governments that sat during the lost decade of 1985-95, and to compare the throne speeches they made with the promises they made in their election. There's a large gap. Even though that time frame is quite

short between the end of the election and the throne speech, quite often the campaign document does not reflect the throne speech. When you look at the term of office they served, and how they fulfilled the promises made during those election years, the gap is amazing. They had unfulfilled promises and the people of Ontario—not just Ontario but all of Canada, perhaps North America—had stopped believing in politicians.

It was an interesting experience: One of the first jobs I had on graduating university was to work down at the Ontario Food Terminal. Things down at the Ontario Food Terminal moved very quickly. You're dealing with fresh produce, fresh fruits and vegetables. When you're dealing with the freshness of that product, that freshness represents money. The faster that product moves, the more valuable it becomes. So you didn't have time, in those days, in the mid-1960s, to write out contracts. You did business on word of mouth. It became evident very early to me, when I was working down there, that your word was your bond. If you promised to deliver something at a given price, even though 10 minutes later that price might change, you'd better deliver, because if you didn't have your word, if you didn't have your bond, you were out of business, no one would deal with you. The only product that you could possibly purchase was the stuff that nobody else wanted and that product had very little value.

So having confidence in what you say and what you do very early on in my work experience became a very important aspect of my philosophy in dealing with life.

The government of Mike Harris elected in 1995 began to change that. People in Ontario are again believing that politicians will do what they said they were going to do. They're beginning to believe that because we have delivered on our promises.

We promised tax cuts in 1995. In the throne speech and in our election document, the Common Sense Revolution, we promised tax cuts. We promised 99 tax cuts. We promised tax cuts and we delivered 99 of those tax cuts. The vast majority of the people of Ontario appreciated that, but 99 times the opposition in this place voted against those tax cuts. They don't believe in tax cuts. They don't believe the people of Ontario can spend that money more wisely and with greater results than they can as a government. They voted against tax cuts every time we brought in one of our 99 tax cuts.

In 1995 the people of Ontario were crying for educational reform of a system that was broken, a system that had spiralling costs ever upwards, higher and higher. Yet the opposition voted against every educational reform that we brought in.

We promised to bring in welfare reform. The years 1985, 1986, 1987, 1988, 1989 and 1990 were good years in the Ontario economy, very good years, and yet in every one of those years the welfare rolls increased in Ontario. We promised to fix that. We promised to change that. Every time we brought in a change to reform the welfare system, to give those people some hope and opportunity for the future instead of leaving them on the

rolls to lose their self-respect, every one of those reforms we brought in the opposition voted against.

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They're against tax cuts, they're against educational reform, they're against welfare reform, they're against smaller government. When we brought in the bill to reduce the size of government, the opposition voted against it.

We delivered the planks of a platform and the plan that it supported, and the plan we delivered is working. Ontario is booming again. Ontario's gross domestic product is running at an annualized rate of 5.4% growth, well ahead of the US rate, which was announced yesterday at 4.8% on an annualized basis. We're higher than any other country in the G7. Our plan for a recovered economy is working.

We're carrying the ball on Canadian growth and outpacing US growth, and we are doing it on increased retail sales. Increased retail sales is a very important number. It shows the confidence that the people of this country and the people of this province have in their economic future that is laid out by a government in power in Queen's Park in Toronto. The people of Ontario have great confidence that this economy is going to continue to grow and continue to improve, and they're showing that by buying products at retail, because retail sales are up.

New residential construction, another very important figure in our economy, continues to increase. And there's increased demand. There's increased demand for automobiles, there's increased electronic demand. Agri-food continues to experience increased activity, especially in the export market. The beginnings of a recovery in the commodity markets are beginning to affect the Ontario economy, and that will carry us forward well on into the future.

Those economic recoveries are creating new jobs. In September, we saw 28,800 new jobs created and a total of 571,000, almost 600,000, new jobs created since 1995 and the election of the Mike Harris government. That's the fastest job creation in Ontario's history.

When we first got to this place in 1995 and early in 1996, we used to hear the cries from the opposition benches. Their cry was, "Where are the jobs?" The jobs are here. They're right here in Ontario. They're coming from all over the world to Ontario to get a job. For two years, I haven't heard the opposition say, "Where are the jobs?" because the jobs are here, the fastest job growth in Ontario's history.

Perhaps as an aside, I should remind the opposition, particularly the official opposition, that the job growth has been caused, has been initiated, by tax cuts, because the tax cuts give people more money to spend; that spending creates economic activity.

Obviously, the Liberals here in Ontario and the Liberals in Ottawa don't understand this. They don't understand that tax cuts and payroll deductions count when it comes to creating jobs. That's their philosophy. We've proven that this is part of the Ontario economy. We've proven that it works. Tax cuts create jobs.

For the federal government not to reduce the employment insurance program when they've got \$21 billion in surplus, most of it coming from Ontario, is sinful; it's disgraceful that this amount of money can't be reduced and paid back into the pockets of employers to hire further employees, back into the pockets of employees to buy more product in retail, to spend that money as they see fit, to create a bigger boom in the economy. It's disgusting that the federal government remains committed to keeping that money in their own pot. They believe in tax and spend; they don't believe tax cuts create jobs. You chaps over there should phone your federal cousins and let them know that—

Interjections.

Mr Chudleigh: Another thing about the federal government, they're taking credit for this big boom in Canada; all the growth in jobs and everything, the feds are taking credit. It's amazing that they have the unmitigated gall to take credit for the boom that's going on. If you look at it carefully, there are only two provinces that are booming in Canada, Ontario and Alberta. Both of those provinces have tax-cutting policies from their provincial governments.

Unfortunately, the feds don't have the vision to understand the power of tax cuts. And, of course, they don't have a plan to implement them.

We've unleashed the economy of Ontario, and we've done that through empowering small business. Small business is where 82% of the jobs are in Ontario. Empowering small business, unleashing the economy, giving them their head, letting them operate, that's where the real economic power of Ontario is. We call on the feds to bring those tax cuts to all of Canada so that economic prosperity can be transcended across the province. Who knows? Even BC may pick it up. Who knows?

I'll quote John McCallum, who's the chief economist of the Royal Bank. "There is a pretty strong economic case to give the lion's share of the fiscal dividend to lowering income taxes." He's talking about the fiscal dividend of the federal government and their huge surplus.

Mr Brad Clark (Stoney Creek): Smart man.

Mr Chudleigh: He's a smart man. You're right, he is. The Ontario experience would prove that case to be true. John McCallum believes in tax cuts. The Canadian Bankers Association said job creation, business and consumer confidence are all at record levels. The association further goes on to say that Ontario's fiscal and tax policies could take much of the credit.

The throne speech has laid out an ambitious plan to build on our success. The throne speech talks about a further 20% cut to income tax rates, which will mean further expansion and further growth in Ontario. We talk about a 20% cut to the provincial portion of property taxes, property taxes that are high in Ontario. That payment that people make on a monthly or quarterly basis under their property taxes will go back into their pocket. That will give them a better quality of life. That reduction

in property taxes is a very important part of the throne speech.

That booming economy and growth creates a situation where more people have jobs, more people are working and more people are purchasing, and that puts more money in government coffers. Every year we've been elected, with every tax cut, we've increased our revenue from taxes in this province. Even though we're taxed at a lower level, we get more money in, more revenue. That money goes to additional health care spending and guaranteed funding for education; it goes to further welfare reforms, welfare reforms that are going to extend to the causes of welfare.

When you get an individual who is permanently on welfare because he's illiterate and can't read, he's not going to get a job as long as he's functionally illiterate. He can only get a job after you've removed that impediment to his employment. That is why our new program, as pointed out in the throne speech, is going to encourage those people to take remedial training, to take educational courses, to learn to read and write so that they can become a functional part of our society and develop their hopes and dreams that one day they too will have a house, drive a car, be in a situation where they have pride in themselves again.

Those conditions will also bring about the situation where we believe there will be 825,000 new jobs in the five years following our first completed job program. Small business will be the basis of that growth; it will be the basis in Halton, and it'll be the basis in each of the communities of Halton. That's why, perhaps, I'm known as a friend of business. It's always surprising to me that every Ontarian and every member of this House shouldn't see themselves as a friend of business. Until a business or an industry hires an individual, nothing happens; no job is created, no opportunity for that individual exists. Once you get a job, your life opens up, your opportunities open up. That job is only going to come from business and industry.

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I would remind the opposition that it's through those jobs that paycheques arrive and taxes are derived out of those paycheques, and the more tax cuts we get the more revenue this government will receive.

Businesses create those jobs and they maintain successful jobs. Lower taxes spur business with more people working and fewer people on welfare. It has continued to give us higher tax revenues. I remind you again that taxes pay for the services that all Ontarians and all members on either side of this House believe are important to Ontarians: health care, education, safe communities and looking after those people who are unable to look after themselves.

Derek Burleton, an economist with the TD Bank, says, "The Ontario government's drive to lower the personal tax burden has paid off handsomely—by putting money back in people's pockets, raising consumer confidence and contributing to a healthier economic environment." We're seeing more and more in all aspects of Canada that the Ontario experience is working; it's paying off.

Lower- and middle-income Ontarians now are beginning to receive hope. They used to be on welfare rolls that increased even during the good times: 1985 through 1990, through 1994. Every year those welfare rolls went up. It got to a point where an observer might suggest that the success of the welfare system was being judged on the number of people who used the system, not the number of people who were off the system in a working environment and creating something in this province.

People were robbed of self-esteem and confidence and robbed of their futures by a system that was purportedly trying to help them. This spiral of hopelessness and despair had to stop. Our program has reduced the welfare rolls by 437,000 people, and improvements announced in the throne speech will continue this progress. We fought hard each step of the way and the opposition voted against us on every one of our changes, the 99 tax decreases.

In education, 37% of the grade 9s in 1995 did not graduate from high school; 20% of the grads in 1995 were functionally illiterate. I don't know how that happens after 13 years of school, but in 1995 that was the case. The school system was failing over 50% of the people who went there for an education. Did this situation cry out for reform? I would think so. In the throne speech it was mentioned that we were the people who came to fix government. Clearly, without new direction, government would have gone on and continued in this unsustainable course.

We are the government of the day and we've come to fix government. We are the people who came to fix government and the rest is semantics. We'll continue to fix government as long as the people of this great province of Ontario give us that opportunity.

The throne speech also mentioned the taxpayers' protection act. With the passing of this act there will be no backsliding on taxes. Taxes spiralled up over a long period of time, and over a shorter period of time they will now spiral down.

We will continue with municipal reform, as pointed out in the throne speech, to bring the benefits of well-run towns and cities to all Ontarians and hopefully to reduce property taxes to a level where people can live in better houses and in better situations in the future.

The throne speech also mentioned bringing in a smart card—already?

The Acting Speaker: Already. Questions and comments?

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): I address my comments to the member for Halton and congratulate him on his remarks. Though I find some disagreement with almost all of them, I would like to comment on the eloquence with which he presented his case.

I take exception with a couple of points, and I raise them to the member and for the House's consideration. He mentioned his early experiences at the food terminal and the need to ensure that produce moved quickly—fruits and produce, I suppose—so that they were freshest

and had the most value. But it's interesting that this member represents a riding on the edge of the greater Toronto area where gridlock is increasingly imperilling our businesses. General Motors in Oshawa has had to, because of gridlock through the Toronto area, suggest to its suppliers that they locate only to the east so as not to have to come through Toronto. The residents of his riding in the town of Milton have challenges around GO train services and we find increasingly large numbers of people forced to sit on stairs in GO trains.

The member talked about unprecedented numbers in residential construction. Housing starts are an important figure, and that's to be applauded, but there is no integrated transit system, there is no sense of infrastructure development that accompanies this slipshod development that's going on throughout the greater Toronto area.

I found it particularly interesting that this member mentioned bankers repeatedly.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Banks?

Mr Smitherman: Banks. The member from Halton supports banks, but he talks nothing about the increased use of food banks, the increased need for schools to feed kids at lunch, and the increase in homelessness in our city.

Ms Martel: I appreciated the comments made by the member from Halton. I'd like to respond in this way: I wondered if he and I had been in the same chamber for the last two years when we were talking about jobs, because I come from a part of the world that has seen no benefit whatsoever from your tax reductions. Your Conservative candidate in Nickel Belt fell right into the trap during the election campaign. He was out there at an all-candidates' debate talking about how the government's 30% income tax cut had created so many jobs in the province of Ontario. I asked him, if that was the case, then why was it that the city of Sudbury, which is the largest regional centre in northern Ontario, had had, according to Statistics Canada, the highest unemployment rate in the country for over 14 months running in the ramp-up to the election. For over 14 months the regional centre in northern Ontario, the city of Sudbury, had the highest unemployment rate.

One would think that if the tax cut was the be-all and the end-all and responsible for job creation, this major centre in northern Ontario would benefit; indeed that the city of Sault Ste Marie that you represent, Mr Speaker, would benefit; or that the city of Thunder Bay would benefit. What has happened, according to Stats Canada is that all those communities continue to have the highest unemployment rate in the country.

The job creation that we see in southern Ontario has nothing to do with the tax cut. It probably has a lot to do with how well the American economy is doing and how the exports in this country have increased to the US. But wake up and smell the coffee, because if tax cuts were creating jobs, my community, the community of Sault Ste Marie, the Speaker's home community and many others in northern Ontario would have seen the benefit—and we haven't.

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke North): I would like to join with the member for Halton to make the case that tax reductions do have a stimulative impact on growth and jobs. If it's not true, then let's look at the logical reverse. If the logical reverse were true, we shouldn't have had any mess when we arrived here in 1995.

I can recall back in the days of the great tax addicts one Bob Nixon. It's about 10 years ago to this month, before he introduced his budget of 1990, which the member for Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington mentioned the other day was used to balance the budget—one of the few times we had a balanced budget, for about three nanoseconds. But do you know how they did it? They raised taxes in one of the most injurious areas across Ontario, and that is in the sensitive hospitality industry, with that glorified commercial concentration tax. I was on a local council back in those days. I can tell you, that was the beginning of the severe recession we had in this province back in 1990-91. It was that tax that introduced the job-killer index on the hospitality industry in the city of Toronto and in a lot of other areas across this province.

Another factor that brought about high assessment problems and unemployment was the high assessment on our education taxes across Ontario, particularly in the city of Toronto. We're just now starting to get out of that.

With respect to the member for Sudbury, obviously there is a problem in the north and part of that is that it deals with a commodity-based problem. That is part of the problem why that area.

1610

Mr Bradley: The member mentioned banks in his speech. I find it interesting what the banks get away with these days in terms of what they do to their employees. The Bank of Montreal made an announcement that it was going to lay off a number of people, and other banks have done the same thing. They keep laying these people off so they get a blip in the stock market. It looks good for a little while and then all these people lose their jobs. More and more, they try to automate. If you don't follow their prescription, of course, they say you're a Luddite, a person who doesn't want to deal with the various machines they have at the bank.

At the Royal Bank in St Catharines, I know they're cutting back on hours again. At one time not that long ago they had hours which were 8 am to 8 pm every day, except Sunday of course, and Saturday from 9 am to 5 pm. They keep shrinking that down. It's now down to 5 o'clock. You have to be there before 5 o'clock on Monday to Wednesday. Then Thursday and Friday they give you a little bit of leeway. Now on Saturday it's 9 to 1. Meanwhile, of course, there are people who don't have jobs or whose hours are cut back because the bankers want to make even more profit.

Interjection.

Mr Bradley: I say to my friend from Etobicoke North, if the banks were losing money, I'd understand that. I'd say they're trying to trim their costs.

Interjection.

Mr Bradley: I know, but he was interjecting, though.

I would understand it, but here these people are, they make these huge profits and then they just boot the people out on the streets. Where are these people going to be able to work? You people seem to support them. You and Conrad Black support them.

The Acting Speaker: Response?

Mr Chudleigh: To the member for Toronto Centre-Rosedale, thank you very much for your comments. Yes, we are concerned about gridlock. Obviously it slows down business. That's what prosperity does; it creates gridlock. Prosperity, jobs creation, more cars. That's why the speech from the throne, which was a good speech—you should give it a read someday—talked about the SuperBuild program. The SuperBuild program is brought in to address those problems.

To the member for Nickel Belt, yes, the north, with the commodity prices worldwide, hasn't experienced the kind of growth that we have in the rest of the province, but we are putting more road structure in there. We're increasing Highway 69 to four lanes all the way up. We're repairing the roads in the north so that prosperity will come. We're building the infrastructure that will give them that growth.

I thank the member from Etobicoke North for his kind remarks about my speech. He talked about the budget of 1989, I believe, the last balanced budget and the taxes that were brought in in order to balance that budget. He did not mention, however, that the employer health tax came in that year and generated \$800 million out of the pockets of employers. They're proud of that. You balanced the budget on the backs of businessmen and on the backs of employees.

To the member for St Catharines: I would point out to him that in the throne speech there was a part about taking the hackles off the credit unions and allowing them to get more involved in the financing.

He also mentioned something about "not long ago." My recollection was that it was quite some time ago. But I understand that as we progress in age, things seem like they were—

Interjection.

Mr Chudleigh: I know that on all sides of this House we really want the same thing: We want the very best for Ontarians.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): I'd like to ask for unanimous consent to add nine minutes from our previous rotation to this rotation and that will be split among the members for Prince Edward-Hastings, Brant and York West.

The Acting Speaker: Agreed? OK.

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): I would like to begin my remarks by congratulating Speaker Carr on his election. If it couldn't be me, I'm pleased that it's him.

I would also like to pay tribute to the predecessors of the Speaker for the restoration of this beautiful room. It is truly awesome to come into it for the first time, and in fact each and every time.

I'm sure that I can speak on behalf of all the newly elected members when I also thank all of the staff here at the Legislature that made the transition so easy, were so helpful in guiding us through the rather complex process. It's very much appreciated.

By nature, I believe I'm an optimist. It is my hope that those who have the privilege to sit here together will do it in the spirit of co-operation. I truly believe that, despite our ideological differences, all of us are here to find a way to better serve the people of Ontario. I appreciate the opportunity to be part of that spirit.

To the people of Prince Edward-Hastings, I express my sincere thanks for their support and the trust and the faith that they've placed in me. In what was a very difficult and remarkably long campaign, the voters of my riding opened their doors to my wife, Linda, and myself time and time again, were truly interested in speaking to us and were truly pleased to have the opportunity to share their concerns. I thank my wife for being with me each and every day of the campaign, and for my children putting up with a lot of pre-cooked meals for a five- or six-week period.

I also need to express my appreciation to a huge group of old and new friends who worked tirelessly through the campaign. After long and hard days on the campaign, it was absolutely uplifting to come into the office and see the numbers working and the encouragement from them. All too seldom, I believe, we fail to recognize the people who work in the trenches each and every election to be part of the democratic process. I want to take the opportunity to thank them once again from the floor of the Legislature.

I also want to take this opportunity to extend my congratulations to our leader, Dalton McGuinty. It was an honour to run through the election with him, and I'm honoured to sit with him in caucus.

I want to assure the voters of Prince Edward-Hastings that I will do my very best to live up to their expectations here at Queen's Park. The people in my riding are very hard-working and they expect the same of their MPP.

The riding that I represent is diverse and I believe it is diverse in a manner that captures the best of what is our Ontario.

Although much of my career has been dedicated to education, those who know me will confirm that one of my real passions is farming. We have an agricultural industry in our community that is the pillar of our region. I want to assure the men and women who are on the farms in my riding that I will be the voice for them.

I also pay tribute to and pledge to be the voice of small business. Small businesses repeatedly during the election told me that they felt they were neglected. The focus was on large industry. The tax cuts have not benefited them and they believe that they merit attention. These small businesses are truly the heroes of our economy. As one who understands the value and the contributions of the corner store, the small video outlet and the tourist operator, I will do my best to represent them here.

1620

It was very clear to me during the election as I talked to constituents that they're tired of confrontation, they're tired of chaos and the government's relentless assault on anyone who dares to differ with their viewpoint. They told me that they want their voices to be heard at Queen's Park and they want their MPP to put their interests ahead of politics.

My voters are tired of how much time was spent on fighting the teachers rather than on reforming the system. They were not impressed with the time that was spent on cutting health care and the small amount of time that was spent on such issues as doctor shortages and the long waits for medical services.

They felt that far too much time was spent by the government patting themselves on the back for the economy of the greater Toronto area and very little time on the economy of places like Frankford and Belleville and Picton and Quinte West. As I stated yesterday in my statement, for more than 200 Bata workers and 700 Nortel workers who will receive their layoff notices in the next few weeks, they saw nothing in the throne speech, nothing that will help to address the concerns they have for next week, next month and next year. I want the Premier and the Minister of Economic Development to know that these workers are looking for help, but instead, in the throne speech they heard rhetoric.

I want to make it clear to the Premier that no one in Prince Edward-Hastings is unhappy that the greater Toronto area is doing well, but there's more to Ontario than the 905 area code. The message they want me to convey to the Premier and to this government is that they are not sharing in that strong and healthy economy. For far too many in Ontario, the Mike Harris revolution has turned their dreams and their hopes for the future into a nightmare.

As a professional engineer, my professional and personal philosophy has always been: If it's not broken, don't fix it. Over the last four years, I'm becoming rather convinced that the current government's philosophy is: If it isn't broke, break it.

Nowhere have we seen this attitude more than in the changes in education. For 17 years I had the pleasure of sitting on a public school board, the last six years as chair, and worked without exception with extremely dedicated, committed people. In spite of the misconception that has been perpetuated through the province, never once did I have a sense that they would come to a meeting and say, "Let's get the taxes up tonight." Our concern was to provide the services at the lowest cost.

I know I discuss this at some risk, because this government has tried—and I stress "tried"—to create an atmosphere in this province which makes it politically unwise for anyone to associate themselves with the education system. But can you imagine anywhere else in the world where a government diverted large numbers of dollars to create a poisoned atmosphere against their educators? As a former trustee, I can assure you that the tens of millions of taxpayer money that was spent on

advertising could have been better spent on special education. I'm proud to stand here today and give praise to those who work in education. They're unsung heroes and I salute them for their successes.

I hope, in concluding my remarks on the education sector, that the government will take a lesson from private industry. I would suggest an example that's very close to the minister's home. Some three years ago, General Motors went on strike. During that entire strike, never once did the president of General Motors stand up and say that her employees aren't working hard enough or that they're overpaid or they don't make a good product. I look to private industry for that example because our employees deserve that same dignity. It's my hope that the education minister will take the next four years and focus on the classroom instead of creating targets to deflect criticism.

Along with my interest in education, I have a keen interest in children's issues. My family and I foster and I have served on the children's aid board of directors for 24 years, the longest service in Ontario. I have a deep respect for those who work on the front line to protect our most vulnerable citizens. Unfortunately, over the years I've seen the type and quantity of abuse of our children increase dramatically. You would not want me to describe the things that are done to some children in our province. So it has been personally distressing to see the cuts that have been made in that area in seeing front-line workers laid off while I know that there are children in abusive situations unable to have a response to their concern.

My family and I live in a rural area. We have a great appreciation of nature in our home, and I would suggest that we could look to Canada geese for an example of how we should be treating our fellow citizens. When a Canada goose is injured and drops out, two stop to stay with that one to help. In Mike Harris's Ontario, that's not a model we use.

Someone once wrote that as legislators we're not expected to complete our work in our lifetime, but neither must we fail to try. We must try. If we do nothing else, we demonstrate to our children that we have the courage to accept responsibility, we have compassion and we're prepared to take a risk for a better community. If we do this, we'll have left our children with the proper tools to prepare for their future.

In closing, we're obligated to find hope in this chamber for the future and to build our sense of community back in this province. This is something that's been missing for the last four years. We must find common ground not just for ourselves, but for our children.

I thank the House for providing me with this opportunity, and I pledge to the residents of Prince Edward-Hastings that I will work hard to ensure that their interests and concerns are fully represented here in the Ontario Legislature.

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): Before I move into the text of my comments, I was struck by my fellow member, my seatmate from Prince Edward-Hastings, and I must

announce to the House—I am sure he would allow me to do so—that today he was granted foster careship of two young children. He fought for them dearly, and I appreciate your efforts, sir.

It is with a great sense of honour and respect for this House, its traditions, the people in it and the people of Ontario that I rise today. I offer my sincere congratulations to all of the new members who for the first time will engage in the business of this place. To the members who have previous experience, some more than others, I say thank you for sharing your wise counsel and your helpful hints. I will admit, Mr Speaker, that it has come from all sides of the House, which has made me very pleased and happy to say.

To the entire staff of the Legislature—the security guards, the housekeeping staff, the catering, the canteen staff, the groundskeepers, the librarians, the researchers, and of course the people who work in this very chamber—you are a credit to this place. You have given your heart and soul to ensure that the people of Ontario are provided with a democracy that is the envy of the world. You are not taken for granted. You are appreciated.

Personally, I want to make a special note to my campaign team in Brant that was directly responsible for putting me in this place. They worked tirelessly day and night, and I truly appreciate and thank them.

I want to take a moment to publicly thank the people of Brant for placing their trust in me: trusting me to represent them as their member of provincial Parliament; trusting me to represent them and bring their vision, their message, their needs, their desires and their dreams for their community to Queen's Park. The people of Brant don't want Queen's Park to do things to them; sometimes they feel that way. They don't want Queen's Park to impose a made-in-Toronto, cookie-cutter solution; sometimes they feel that way. They want true, honest, meaningful consultation that includes all citizens from all walks of life, not just a very special selected few, and sometimes after the fact. They want a Queen's Park that can help them bring their vision to life.

The people of Brant are employed and, unfortunately, unemployed; urban and rural; able-bodied and physically challenged; rich and poor. Collectively, whatever our status, we are the people of Brant. We are a microcosm of this great province. We all want and need respect and dignity.

This can be accomplished with the help of good government: not a government that does all things for all people, not a government that dictates, not a government that dominates, not a government that acts in haste, not a government that never admits its mistakes or even corrects them. We need a government that understands and respects people, a government that puts people first.

1630

Brant has been the home of outstanding citizens who have contributed to the well-being of not only Brant but also the province, the country, and indeed the world. Alexander Graham Bell, inventor of the telephone, did so

right in Brant. Dr James Hillier, the holder of the patent for the electron microscope, was born and raised in Brantford. Emily Stowe, a pioneer in both medicine and education, left her mark originating from Brant. Poetess Pauline Johnson, Chief Joseph Brant, Thomas B. Costain, W. Ross Macdonald, the Massey family, the Cockshutt family, the Steadman family, the late Phil Hartman, and of course Wayne Gretzky have all hailed from the Brant area. These are just a few of the more familiar names that have made us very proud and who have hailed from Brant.

I now introduce to you one of our own hometown heroes, Jimmy "The Iceman" MacNeil. Jimmy is gaining celebrity status as the number one Zamboni driver in North America. Just to let you know, Speaker, the company, Zamboni, is from Brant. We need the vote of every Ontarian to ensure Jimmy maintains his vital lead in the tally against his nearest rival from Detroit. I respectfully ask that we log on to www.zamboni.com/newsBallot.html and vote for Jimmy "The Iceman" MacNeil.

Every single citizen of Brant is special. I dedicate my actions and I dedicate and swear by my word that I will treat each and every one of you with respect and dignity, as will Dalton McGuinty and the Liberal Party of Ontario.

Brant/Brantford has produced more than its fair share of distinguished citizens. There is no question that the people of Brant have garnered a well-earned reputation for caring and sharing whatever the political affiliation, if any at all.

I want to pay tribute to the good people who have entered these chambers before me. Again, to name but a few of the over 30 outstanding members who have come from the old ridings of Brant and now the new riding of Brant, I respectfully acknowledge Thomas Preston, George Martin, Morrison McBride, Henry Hagey, George Gordon, Mac Makarchuk, Dick Beckett, Phil Gillies, Dave Neumann, Brad Ward, Ron Eddy and, yes, Ron Johnson. Speaker, the last four members mentioned were personal acquaintances of mine and they represented all three parties.

Special mention is given to special individuals: Arthur Sturges Hardy, the fourth Premier of Ontario, a Liberal; Harry Nixon, the 13th Premier of Ontario, a Liberal; and finally Bob Nixon, a living treasure and cherished, respected gentleman, a Liberal. All came from Brant.

Today I have spoken mainly about people, not the accumulation of wealth. I have spoken of dignity and respect, not punishment and revolution. I have spoken about service and caring, not blaming and zero tolerance. My intention is to bring issues before the government that the people of Brant feel are needed to be better served and that apply to their vision.

The unique proposal to keep St Joseph's Hospital open that fulfills the mandate of this government, saves millions of dollars, helps with the recruitment of physicians to our underserviced area and forges a broad health care delivery partnership is one such issue.

For the health and safety of the citizens of Brant and its visitors, a second issue is that we ask for a turnaround to be built on the new stretch of Highway 403 between Brant and Ancaster.

We ask for an improved funding formula to prevent one-high-school communities from losing their beloved places of learning. This also applies to some elementary schools which have been overlooked.

The made-in-Toronto, cookie-cutter formula doesn't work. We ask for serious and immediate changes to the special education funding formula to be inclusive, not exclusive. Don't design student profile schemes to eliminate children in order to save money. Design them to celebrate their differences and welcome them into the family of education with the help that they need to learn.

In closing, I want to publicly express my love, my dedication and my support to my entire family, especially my wife, Rosemarie; my children, Joe, Rachel and Nicole; my mother, Lucille; and my mother-in-law, Madge. Thank you for your patience, support, understanding, and most of all your love.

I'm ready to serve to the best of my ability.

Mr Sergio: Mr Speaker, first of all let me congratulate you on your excellent win as Speaker of the House. I can only promise that we'll try to do as well as in the past session and not have you on your feet as much as possible, even though sometimes you wish you could just to change posture, if you will. We'll try not to be as raucous, as you would want not to see.

Congratulations to my colleagues from Brant and Prince Edward-Hastings. I think this is the quality of people we have received from their citizens who have sent them to Queen's Park, and they have summed up so beautifully what's really missing in the speech from the throne.

The speech from the throne is a myth of all those wonderful things the members for Prince Edward-Hastings and for Brant have mentioned to us here. Government yes, but with compassion, with care, with fairness. There is absolutely none of that in the speech from the throne.

I have to say, without raising the ire of my colleagues on the government side, that when they keep on saying, "We are not the government; we are the ones sent here to fix the government," and we hear quotes like this, the message we send to the people out there is that they have been elected to form a government and now they are here and they can do whatever the heck they want, regardless of the other people out there who are looking at their government for help, for assistance, for compassion, for some caring.

We have heard many times, and even today, some of the members saying: "You know what? Our economy is booming. The welfare rolls are down." Oh yeah? First of all, I could give you a long list in my few minutes why the economy is doing well here in Ontario. I could also give you a list of what happened to some of those thousands of people who are off the welfare rolls.

The way we watch the news, we read the paper or we get reports, I'm sure so do our Premier, his staff and the members of the government as well. We read every day that homelessness is rampant. The number of people living out of reasonable accommodation is much higher. Do we see them putting in any money to solve the situation? Uh, uh. They say, "Where is Ottawa?" Look, it's our problem here. Let's not pass the buck to the city or whatever. I think they should assume responsibility for some of those people who cannot speak or act for themselves. That's what a government is for.

1640

Do you know how many thousands of children go hungry every morning? I'm sure they know. I'm sure our Premier knows very well why some of those 38,000 kids go hungry every morning. Is it because of that particular group that we have somehow closed an eye and said, "Among some of those 200,000 people, there really are people in need"? Let's find out how we can help those people.

It's one thing to say, "Look, the Liberals always say no to tax cuts and stuff like that." It's not quite so; it's not quite true. We have said that there are other areas to be taken into consideration first, prior to giving the richest people in our province a tax break. We have to take care of those young kids. We have to take care of the people who cannot take care of themselves, otherwise what is the purpose of forming a government, calling ourselves a government? I believe, as the members for Brant and Prince Edward-Hastings have said, we have to be compassionate. We can only do that by delivering good government to the people of Ontario. Unless we do exactly that, it's fine and dandy to have thousands of pages read in one hour's time, promising all kinds of things when we don't see any action.

Now we're going into the second term, fifth year, whatever, of this government and, God bless them, I won't take anything away, because they've been elected. All the members have been elected by their people in our democratic system to represent their constituents. I'm sure they are here because they have done well in their community and they are expected to continue to do so. But once we are in this House, dealing with all the people of our province, then we have to widen our views and look further, beyond the boundaries of our own particular riding.

We in Metropolitan Toronto have a problem that is more diverse than some of the other parts of Ontario, and we have to look at those problems on an individual basis. It is like telling a municipality, for example—and I don't want to touch the very sensitive issues of the moraine that are in front of us. It's like when a local municipality is dealing with a rezoning application or applications, and everyone is given their full view, assessed on individual merits. I believe that a good government should be doing exactly that, looking at the people beyond the boundaries of the city of Toronto and looking at the needs of those particular communities.

There are many areas and many reasons as to why we have said we have to provide a good health care system and education funding. We've got to try and assist our students if we want them to get a good education. There's none of that in the budget. There's nothing in the budget with respect to our seniors, and I don't have to tell you the big problem that exists not only with nursing homes but with retirement homes, and we will hear more about it.

That's where I compliment members in their presentations and maiden speeches in this House, because instead of saying to the government, or retorting to the government, what they have done and how they have done it in the past four years or so, it is how they see Parliament working on behalf of the people they represent. I completely share their views. I share the zeal with which they have expressed those views, how we should be serving the people of Ontario. I hope a little bit of what they have said can rest with us, with every member, and can be assimilated by the Premier, because he continues to say more of the same; I hope so, because the people of Ontario deserve a caring and compassionate government.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Questions and comments? The member for Trinity-Spadina.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): That's it.

Mr Bradley: Did you get re-elected?

Mr Marchese: Yes, I did. I'm happy to be here, I say to the member from—what's the riding there—Niagara?

Mr Bradley: Still St Catharines.

Mr Marchese: Still St Catharines. It hasn't changed. That's why when he introduced me as the member for Trinity-Spadina you asked, "Did you still get elected?" Because it's a new riding, I imagine.

Speaker, I congratulate you, and like the member from Niagara Centre who yesterday appealed to you to be kind to him, I appeal to you in the same way, because notwithstanding my admiration for the previous speaker, he did from time to time restrain me from using strong words against the government, you will remember. He attempted on many occasions to sanitize my not-so-frequent abuse of language levied against that government, so I hope you will be a little bit more lenient with me from time to time. Thank you and congratulations.

I want to congratulate the member from Elgin-Middlesex and Brant for having been elected here in this House.

Ms Martel: Prince Edward-Hastings, sorry.

Mr Marchese: Prince Edward-Hastings. There you go. I thought I got it right. I'll get it right the next time. I want to tell you that I was happy you didn't say things that would make me attack Liberals, because I've done that from time to time. All I can say is that I wish you the best. Hopefully, you will not be divided among yourselves and disillusioned with those machinations within the Liberal caucus and you will still be happy enough at the end of your first term to run again. But I appreciate the sincerity with which both of you have presented your views and wish you both the best.

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): I will comment on the initial speeches from the members opposite. I'll leave the member from York West alone, since I've heard him for four years and I've got lots of time to respond to him in the future also.

To the members from Prince Edward-Hastings and Brant, I congratulate you on your opening speeches. I thought they were both excellent speeches. You took the time to talk about your communities, your families and the people who helped get you elected. The member for Prince Edward-Hastings talked about other people in his riding, about his desire to fight for the agricultural community, which I think is an excellent idea on his part, fighting for more jobs in his community.

He could start, I might add, by asking his federal cousins to reduce the EI premiums. The booming economy which we are experiencing, many of us in our ridings in southern Ontario like Niagara Falls, has spread throughout the province, but maybe in some places better than others, so there is more work to be done. That was, as you know, a theme of ours during the campaign. We will continue to do that, to make sure the booming economy in Ontario spreads to areas like Prince Edward-Hastings.

The member opposite, though, could help by getting on his federal Liberal cousins to reduce this offensive, extremely arrogant \$21-billion surplus they have in the EI fund. One editorial said today, "This massive, growing surplus is particularly galling for the jobless." That's because these types of taxes kill jobs. I hope the member will join us in that fight with his federal cousins.

The member for Brant—also an excellent speech—talked about former members. Jimmy MacNeil—I might mention to him that my brother Brad Maves in Chippawa, a suburb of Niagara Falls, is also on the list, www.zamboni.com. My brother Brad has gone on radio stations and in several newspapers and actually urged people to vote for Jimmy because he'd like to see an Ontarian and a Canadian person win the Zamboni Driver of the Year, so I would encourage others to do that around the province.

Mr Bradley: I want to compliment the member for Prince Edward-Hastings, the member for Brant, the member for York West and any others who have spoken today. I'd be interested in their views—perhaps the member for Brantford would be interested in this particularly—on the proliferation of gambling opportunities thrust on this province by this government.

I know many of the Family Coalition members from Scarborough and other places here who worry about family values while they join in opening casinos all over the province of Ontario so that people can squander their last penny at those casinos. I wonder at the morality of a government that portrays itself as very moral in opening these various casinos. I'm talking now about these so-called charity casinos across the province; I call them the new Mike Harris gambling halls.

1650

I thought we had stopped them in their tracks, and I hope that we have. A lot of us asked questions in this House, because we were afraid of course that there would be those awful video lottery terminals, the electronic slot machines, in every bar and every restaurant of every village, town and city of the province of Ontario, as the Ontario government, conservative in its name only, reached its large paws into the pockets of the most desperate people, the people who aren't born into privilege, the people who don't have the connections to get the great jobs or may not have had the educational opportunities, who look at this as a one chance perhaps to get some money. So you prey on the most desperate people in our society.

I know they tried to thrust one of these so-called charity casinos on Brantford, and I'd be very interested in knowing what the member for Brantford thinks of this effort to destabilize and tear at the very fabric of Ontario.

Ms Martel: I would like to respond specifically to some comments made by the member for York West. This has particularly to do with the lack of any reference at all to any initiatives on the part of the Harris government with respect to homelessness and child poverty.

We judge a society based on what we do for the most vulnerable in our society, and the government cannot continue to ignore the fact that we have a crisis in this province with respect to homelessness and a crisis in this province with respect to child poverty. You cannot continue with the contradiction of claiming every day in this House about how Ontario is booming when so many more thousands of the most vulnerable, our kids, are living in poverty in this province.

The government could do something with respect to homelessness, for example, instead of saying, as you did in the throne speech, that this is a very complex issue and we have to work with the federal government and municipal governments. You could follow up on an announcement that your own former minister Janet Ecker made with respect to this government setting aside surplus land for the development of affordable housing. She made that announcement in this House some months ago.

I looked in the announcement that was recently made by the Chair of Management Board when he talked about a committee that was going to be established to look at the disposal of public assets, and there was nothing, absolutely nothing, as a follow-up to the commitment that was made by that former minister in this House.

With respect to child poverty, I remind the government that we can continue to do nothing, but there will be an enormous cost to all of us in the future. The proposals that were made with respect to Fraser Mustard have effectively been shelved by your government. The demonstration projects that your minister announced several weeks ago were demonstration projects, four, that were already up and running before the recommendations came out. I urge you, take those recommendations off the shelf; do something about child poverty before it's too late.

The Speaker: Responses?

Mr Parsons: I would like to thank the member for Niagara Falls for some of his comments. I was intrigued about the philosophy of the federal government having responsibility for creating certain issues.

As I've talked to the people who are losing their jobs in my area, they have over and over discussed free trade and asked that I pass on their thanks to Brian Mulroney for sending their jobs south of the border. I don't plan to see him in the next little while, so perhaps a member of the government could do that for me.

What I do know is that in my riding four years ago there were three schools offering breakfast clubs. There are now over 30. We have hungry children in our community, and I would suggest that we consider the philosophy of the Salvation Army, which says, "We don't know how we got here and we don't know who's to blame, but we're here to fix it."

We have the opportunity to fix the problem of hungry children in Ontario. Let's forget the past; let's look to the future.

ROYAL ASSENT SANCTION ROYALE

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I thank the member—a quick moment.

I beg to inform the House that in the name of Her Majesty the Queen, Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been pleased to assent to certain bills in her chambers.

Clerk Assistant (Ms Deborah Deller): The following are the titles of the bills to which Her Honour has assented:

Bill 4, An Act respecting the Legislative Assembly and its officers / Projet de loi 4, Loi concernant l'Assemblée législative et ses fonctionnaires;

Bill 5, An Act to amend certain statutes because of the Supreme Court of Canada decision in M. v. H. / Projet de loi 5, Loi modifiant certaines lois en raison de la décision de la Cour suprême du Canada dans l'arrêt M. c. H.

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE (continued)

The Speaker: Further debate?

Ms Martel: I want to begin, Mr Speaker, because I haven't done this so far, even though I've been up asking questions, to congratulate you on your election as Speaker. I'd offer you my condolences on the job that you're about to undertake, but certainly the former Speaker did a very good job in his capacity, and I'm sure that you will continue to do the same. I wish you well in all of your endeavours.

I am pleased to have the opportunity to participate in the throne speech debate today. While there are a number of things that I could talk about, I want to focus on two items in particular. The first has to do with disabled

Ontarians, and the second has to do with physician shortages in this province. Let me begin first with disabled Ontarians.

The throne speech said "the desire to ensure opportunities for all members of society also underpins your government's ongoing effort to develop an Ontarians with Disabilities Act. Consultations on this important initiative continue. The goal is to introduce a new action plan this session."

I wonder if this government really thinks disabled people don't have a clue about what went on in this House in the last four years. During the election in 1995, this government, like the other two opposition parties, made the commitment to Ontarians with disabilities that we would, in the first term of that government, enact a piece of legislation that would recognize and allow the disabled in this province to contribute in terms of the workforce, to contribute socially, to have government remove barriers that face people in order that they could make a contribution.

The Conservative Party signed on to that during the election in 1995 and so did we and so did the Liberal party at the time. What happened after that was disgraceful. For the first three years of its mandate the Conservative government did nothing with respect to any kind of enactment, to any kind of legislation that affected the disabled in this province.

It wasn't until the summer of 1998, three full years after having been elected, that the Harris government finally decided to have some consultations with respect to the development of the said act. I remember those consultations because they were so flawed as a consultation process. The parliamentary assistant, Mr Shea, went to seven or eight communities. He held private, invitation-only meetings with the disabled community to hear their views on what they thought would be needed in a piece of legislation that would guarantee them access to make a full contribution to Ontario society.

I remember the night before he was in Sudbury, members of the disabled community, to their credit, held a rally at the Canadian Hearing Society in order that they might have some kind of public expression of what they thought was needed, because they certainly knew that they weren't going to have any kind of open, public consultation the next day. So many people in the room, representing so many organizations who represent disabled people weren't even invited to that little private, backdoor meeting that was supposed to be to discuss so important a piece of legislation.

I remember the criticism that the government took with respect to the consultation, but I remember even more clearly the shameful piece of legislation that the government then introduced as their supposed response to that consultation. It was a three-page document that did nothing to address the real and serious barriers that disabled people in Ontario face. The only thing that shameful three-page document directed the government to do was to have all ministries do a review of their policies and their procedures and their legislation to

ensure that nothing that they were doing would cause a barrier to disabled people in the province.

Do you know what? That was a review that had already been underway, because when we formed the government in 1990, one of the first acts that was taken by the then Chair of Management Board, Frances Lankin, was to direct all ministries to do a systematic barriers review. We also provided funding to each of those ministries to make the changes that were going to be necessary to remove those barriers.

The first thing that this Conservative government did upon being elected was to stop, cancel, end that review. Three years later, in an effort to say they had done something for the disabled, they ordered that those reviews be reinstated, but they didn't even provide the funding that would have been necessary to do something about barriers which existed.

1700

We find today, in terms of responding to the throne speech, the government yet again coming forward and saying to the disabled community: "We intend to do something about your situation. We intend to develop an Ontarians with Disabilities Act. We're going to consult about some new initiatives that we can undertake."

It's like giving the disabled the back of the hand, because they have been there before with this government. They have heard it before from this government and they saw no concrete action under this government, despite the very clear commitment the then leader of the Conservative Party made during the 1995 election. I hope that this time the government truly wants to do something for the disabled, because thus far your responsibility to respond to their needs has been completely undermined by your lack of action with respect to these same people.

The one concrete thing the government has done with respect to the disabled is the second thing I want to comment on. We have been trying to raise a red flag with the minister, Mr Baird, in this House with respect to a serious and significant problem he now has with the ODSP. You will recall, Mr Speaker, that when this legislation was debated in this House, my colleague the member for Beaches-East York said very clearly that the proof of how well this would work would be in the details, and that is exactly the case.

We have a program, I regret to say, that is so much like the Family Responsibility Office that it scares me. I watched this government, when it downsized, when it closed the regional offices to put something new in place, completely destroy a system that was put in place to make sure that families across this province got their support payments. Now we have a second office, the responsibility of which it is to determine if disabled people get benefits and to make sure that those benefits flow. But what we have in reality is an office that is grossly understaffed. It's an office where the staff people have not had the training they need to do this new work. It's an officer where, if you call the 1-800 line, you cannot get through. And my office has tried. We know that in the middle of September all MPPs received a note

saying that if you wanted to try and access the adjudication unit you should look at this e-mail address on the Internet, and even today that site is still not up, over a month later. It is the same type of problems that we saw with the Family Responsibility Office being repeated and it's going to be repeated tenfold.

If I can say anything to this government as a warning, it is "Don't go down that road again." Remember the kind of financial hardship you put support recipients through in this province with the massive and very negative changes you made to the Family Responsibility Office. Do the work now to fix the problem that is staring you in the face. I know it is a problem because I have talked to members in this House who are getting calls from the disabled just like I am, to say, number one, their filing packages were sent to the adjudication unit in Toronto and they were lost; their filing packages have now been found, but it's going to take a number of months before a decision can be made; or, number three, they were on Canada pension and should have automatically been put on the ODSP and were not—any number of problems, the same kind of thing that I saw with the family responsibility office.

I would urge this government, and I would urge the minister in particular, who was too busy yesterday trying to give pat answers instead of dealing with the problems we brought forward, do yourself a big favour: Staff up this office to make it work, because what you are doing is putting the disabled, who are among the most vulnerable in this province, in an untenable situation.

The government absolutely has to review again the policy that it's brought forward which results in the cancellation of a transportation allowance to those disabled individuals. You cannot expect the disabled, with the small pension they have, with the small disability benefit, to also on an ongoing basis be able to access transportation so that they can get to doctors' appointments, so that they can get to medical clinics, so that they can get to a whole host of other support networks that they have to get to just in order to make it from day to day.

This government has cut that transportation allowance, and it's the responsibility of this government to take a step back, to review that very negative policy and to reinstitute that travel allowance for those disabled people. Don't penalize them even more. Don't make the job they have to do that much more difficult. I encourage this government, and the minister in particular, who isn't here today, to get a grip on what is happening at the ODSP, because it is unravelling and going downhill really quickly.

With respect to physician shortages, I watched with interest as the government said they wanted to do something about the shortages in northern Ontario and rural Ontario. But I also watched with dismay that the government's response was that they would only provide free tuition for those medical students who after five years of medical school decided to relocate to an underserviced area. That is the government's response to what

is a very serious and a very difficult problem, not only in my part of the world but in many rural communities and in many small cities across the province now.

Five years to do something concrete on physician maldistribution is five years too long for too many Ontarians to wait. I have too many communities in my riding that are still on the underserviced area program and have been on the underserviced area program for the entire time that this government has been in office. The government's response, which is to have nothing done for at least another five years, is just not adequate.

People in this province pay tax dollars to guarantee access to medical care, and it shouldn't matter where you live in this province; you should be able to access physician services. The government, at least, before making this announcement could have waited for the recommendations which are to come from the government's own appointed commissioner looking at physician distribution and physician maldistribution to see if he had anything concrete which could be implemented now, which could respond to the situation now. To say we're not going to do anything for another five years is just to leave thousands and thousands of Ontarians without any access to primary health care.

It's not as if the current programs that are in place are working, because I have watched what the government has tried to do over the last four years to respond to the physician maldistribution problem and even what the government has tried to do hasn't worked.

For example, the government has a bursary program so that if you are a physician who agrees to go and operate in an underserviced area, you can get an additional grant over whatever you bill OHIP for your service in that underserviced area. The problem continues to be that after the grant is over, in the majority of cases those physicians leave the community and they go and practise somewhere else. Outside of having recruited them and their getting that additional financial incentive, there has been nothing in place to try and retain them in those communities. In many cases they're just not interested when the grant money runs out, and that is most regrettable.

That is a program that is in place now, and despite it being in place, the numbers of communities in northern and rural Ontario that are awaiting physicians are as high as ever. Just in October, November and December, 32 communities in the north that are underserviced need 96 physicians; in the south, 67 underserviced communities need 326 physicians.

The government came forward with another program, ostensibly to help communities that didn't have enough physicians. It was called the northern group funding plan. It allowed a number of physicians to work together in a clinic setting on a global funding basis in order to operate and hopefully keep them in communities. The problem again was that the program discriminated in northern Ontario between big communities versus small. If you had a population over 10,000, you couldn't even apply. A number of communities in my riding that are under-

serviced do have a population of over 10,000, but that doesn't mean their needs for a physician, or two or three physicians, are any less.

I wrote to the minister, Mrs Witmer, at the time and said, "Why would you ever pit one small northern community against a larger northern community with a population of over 10,000? Why would you ever come forward with a program that discriminates so badly against communities, all of whom need physicians?" There was no reply. We have a program in place, even a second program, that tries to encourage a group practice that hasn't worked either. We continue to have so many communities sitting on an underserviced area list and people waiting for some kind of primary care.

1710

It's not enough for me to say that the government hasn't done anything and not offer a solution. I offer two:

Since this government has been in power, there has been a freeze on the CHC program, and I encourage this government to look at that program as a means to recruit and retain not only physicians but other health care professionals in northern and rural Ontario. We have a CHC in Sudbury. It also has a satellite in two of the communities that are in my riding. It has proven to be a most effective tool to bring and to keep primary care physicians, to bring and to keep nurse practitioners, physiotherapists, dieticians etc—a whole host of people involved in the provision of care in our community.

Since that CHC has been established, they have repeatedly tried in the last three years to get the government to lift the freeze on the funding cap so that they could staff up the two satellites they have so that in those other two communities, both of which are underserviced, we could have centres where we would have physicians who would be retained, and other health care professionals as well providing care.

This minister and this government continue to maintain a freeze on that program despite the fact that it has been a proven model in terms of recruitment and retention, in terms of health promotion, in terms of health prevention, in terms of drawing any number of other stakeholders in, people dealing with mental health etc, to provide much broader care in the community. Not only could we use that in our community, but there are a number of other northern communities now and others in rural Ontario that have also sent proposals in for CHCs to this government. All of them remain on hold.

I think the government would be very wise to take some of that money that it would otherwise invest in free tuition and put some of that money into the CHC budget, because it is a model that works and it is a model that would be so very helpful in so very many northern communities.

The second thing I want to encourage the government to do is to increase the number of sites in the primary health care pilot project. I have a particular community in my riding that for the last 18 months has been trying to get this government to fund their model of health care under the primary health care project. It is the community

of Valley East and it is their health services pilot project. Again, the same concept as a CHC: primary care providers, nurse practitioners, physicians, physiotherapists etc working in a bilingual setting in a bilingual community to deliver care on a 24-hour basis to people who need it.

I was most distressed that when the government announced three more sites in September, the city of Valley East was not included, because they had been working with the Ministry of Health since January of this year to try and get this project funded. The only opportunity they really have to do so has to come from the primary care project, and it was most regrettable that the government didn't fund them at the time. I would encourage the government, now that it has seven sites up and running, to look to that model as well as one that could be very useful, very important, very effective in attracting and retaining physicians and other health care providers not only in northern Ontario but in so many other centres in rural Ontario as well where people don't have family physicians.

Finally with respect to health, I have to mention the serious crisis that is facing the Sudbury Hospital. The government said nothing with respect to hospital funding in its throne speech. I would expect, given there are at least 79 hospitals in the province now operating in a deficit position, that the government would have had some kind of response in its throne speech to that very serious matter.

I would remind the government that in my community we have had an order imposed by the Health Services Restructuring Commission. We are going from three hospitals to one, but this government has to recognize that there are serious costs associated with that kind of transition and with the magnitude of that transition. The Ministry of Health and the minister cannot expect that the community all on its own can fund the enormity of that transition. We now are looking at an \$8-million deficit, and I encourage the minister, because there was nothing in the throne speech about hospital financing, to look at Sudbury and all of those other hospitals and deal with those deficit situations.

The Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): I was certainly enjoying the presentation put forth by the member for Nickel Belt, who had an excellent presentation, but I couldn't agree with a lot of the comments she was making during the presentation.

She was making reference to the economy and some of the problems of employment in the Nickel Belt area, and I can understand there is concern, but there is some responsibility for the local members to help stimulate the economy in the respective ridings that you live in.

I was just sitting here thinking, what would it have been like in the Nickel Belt riding if the economy hadn't been stimulated in Ontario in general? It would have been really going downhill. I gather from what she's saying that it's at least holding its own. But just imagine, if the 572,000 net new jobs in the last four years hadn't

been created in this province, what would have happened in Sudbury. It would have been a real negative, something like during the term that the NDP had here in Ontario when we had a net increase of jobs of minus 20,000. That was the record they had.

Then she talked about the economy, and I thought that was kind of interesting because it's somebody from the NDP who was in cabinet during that term in the early 1990s when they kept two sets of books just to keep the public confused. I think that was very unfair to do that. And to talk about how we're riding on the American economy, yes, the American economy is doing quite well, and it was doing quite well in the early 1990s, thank you very much, but Ontario's economy wasn't doing very well.

Then I wonder, why is the economy in BC, out on the Canadian left coast, doing so poorly? Because there's an NDP government out there, and I think that's kind of unfortunate. It kind of explains—

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton Centre): The left coast?

Mr Galt: Out on the left coast—you picked up on that one. You're kind of slow; it only took 10 seconds to pick up on it. But I think that sums up the problem we've had with the economy, the NDP governments in Ontario and in BC.

Mr Monte Kwinter (York Centre): I just wanted to build on the comments made by the member for Nickel Belt when she talked about the crisis in hospital funding and health care. Members who were in the last Parliament will know that one of my pet peeves and one of my pet concerns was the hospital in my riding, Branson, on which I tried to get the government to change its mind, which it didn't. It is now part of North York General Hospital.

One of the problems that we had at Branson was that we could not get emergency room nurses or emergency room doctors in the evenings. Almost 10 months have gone by where the emergency department at Branson hospital has been closed from 10 o'clock at night until 8 in the morning. I have one of the largest concentrations of seniors in Ontario, and as you know if you're dealing with seniors, when things happen to them at night they get very frightened and that's when they need emergency care.

So what has happened? The government proposed that North York General Hospital take over Branson and all would be well. Well, all is not well. We have a situation where 10 months after that particular initiative was undertaken, the emergency department at Branson hospital is still closed. It's now called North York General but it's still closed, and the citizens of York Centre and the large catchment area, greater than York Centre, do not have a readily available emergency department during the hours between 10 o'clock at night and 8 o'clock in the morning.

I think this is absolutely criminal. It's an area that this government has got to address. One of the problems is that they made the initiative because they thought it

would play right, but they didn't prepare for the repercussions of what they did.

Mr Marchese: I want to thank my friend from Nickel Belt for her specific focus on two things—the introduction of an Ontarians with Disabilities Act and, the other, the Ontario disability support program, very much connected to that—and, thirdly, physician shortages in underserviced areas. She was very specific.

This government too was very specific, and in its throne speech the Premier, through the Lieutenant Governor, mentioned that this government is here to serve real Canadians or real Ontarians, if I remember correctly. I was profoundly worried about the implications of who those real Canadians or Ontarians were and who the other unreal Ontarians were, and I hope to be able to speak to that point when I have my opportunity to do speak.

1720

I suspect that the people my friend from Nickel Belt spoke about may be those undeserving Canadians, those who are not real Canadians, I'm assuming, because this government has done very little to deal with issues of disability, to deal with the Ontarians with Disabilities Act that they have promised. These people represent 15% of the population. They haven't dealt with it. That must mean they're unreal. The member proposed modest ways to deal with physician shortages in those underserviced areas, and this government is disregarding it completely.

The focus of this government appears to be its complete devotion to income tax cuts as a solution to our economic problems. I tell you, Speaker, your colleagues have never presented once any evidence to show that is the case. They are obsessed with income tax cuts and nothing else.

Mr Maves: I thank the member opposite for her comments. Just responding to one thing that I found a little curious, the complaint about difficulty getting through to the phone services that we now have for the Ontario disability support program, we had a little bit of concern about that, so we've made some calls. There's been an overwhelming volume of applications for the ODSP. I think we've been receiving about 300 calls per day.

We tried a little experiment and called the public line six times. The first call: one ring and there was a one-minute wait to talk to a person; the second call, it was busy; third call, three rings and it was answered; the fourth call, one ring and another minute-and-a-half to talk to a person; the fifth call, one ring and it was answered, another minute and a half to talk to a person; sixth call, one ring and again it was answered. That's the public line. Those are six calls. We thought that was pretty good.

Mr Bradley: You called the government MPP line.

Mr Maves: We called the government MPP line, the member from St Catharines shouts out, at the following times: 10:25, 11:10, 11:35 and 12:20. At no point in time did staff have to wait longer than five rings to get a response and at no time were they on hold for longer than 30 seconds. While the member opposite seems to be experiencing problems with both those lines, in the

experiments that we've conducted they've been quite effective.

The member did talk about the problems with shortages of doctors. It's a long-standing problem in Ontario. We've done a lot of things with incentives for doctors: actual money on the table to locate to underserved areas, disincentives, less money if you go to an over-serviced area like Toronto. We've given them pay raises—the first time since 1992. We're now offering to pay tuition for docs who go to underserved areas. That was my seatmate's idea—Gerry Martiniuk from Cambridge—which found its way into our platform and the Liberals' during the campaign. I hope that will go a long way to helping us with this problem.

The Speaker: Response?

Ms Martel: I'd like to thank the members from Northumberland, York Centre, Trinity-Spadina and Niagara Falls for their comments. I'd respond in this way: The member from Northumberland said imagine, if the 500,000-plus jobs had not been created, what the region of Sudbury would look like. I remind the member that in my remarks I made it a point to say for the last 14 months in the lead-up to the elections that we had the highest unemployment rate in the country. So I don't know how much worse it could have got, I say to the member from Northumberland.

How much worse can it get, when you're at the top of the unemployment list for some 14 months at a time when the government is trying to convince people that by the mere fact of having a tax cut, people have more money in their pockets, so they spend more and they create more jobs. That has been the premise of the government's argument on the tax cuts, that if people get money in their pocket, they're going to go and spend.

If that's the premise, I have to say to the government, it should have worked in Sudbury too then. It has nothing to do with whether or not we depend on nickel. If your theory is right, then people in Sudbury should have had more money and they should have gone out to spend. That's why I say it has nothing to do with the tax cuts because if it did, Sudbury wouldn't be an anomaly and other northern communities wouldn't be an anomaly. It has everything to do with the fact that in southern Ontario there has been a tremendous boom with respect to exports and that's why many companies are benefiting.

With respect to what's happening to physicians, I say to the honourable member from Niagara Falls, with all due respect, your initiatives haven't worked, my friend. If they had worked, we wouldn't be sitting in the position where we have 32 communities needing 96 doctors, and 67 in the south needing 326 physicians. I've tried to put forward to you today some proposals that I think would work, because they are models that have been tried and have been proven to be effective, and your government would've been in a better position following up on some of those rather than to leave the problem for another five years, which is what the net effect of your announcement in the throne speech really is.

The Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Brian Coburn (Carleton-Gloucester): I'd like to share my time with the member from Guelph-Wellington. This is a little bit different than a council chamber, that I've been used to for the last 18 years; there are benefits, certainly, to being a mayor.

In my first opportunity to address the Legislature, I'd just like to say what an honour it is for me to be in this place and over the last few days to hear some of the members who've been here for a while and their oratorical skills and their knowledge of the issues and—

The Speaker: Sorry to interrupt the member's first speech, but we need unanimous consent to split the time. Is there unanimous consent? Agreed. I apologize, especially in the first speech, for doing that.

Mr Coburn: Thank you, Mr Speaker; just another rule I learned—to listen to some of the members who've been here for a number of years, certainly on either side of the House, and the experiences they've gained and the issues they've dealt with across this province.

I'd like to congratulate all the members on their recent successes in their democratic process, and I look forward to working with members on all sides over the next four years.

I would like to express my appreciation and thanks to those back in Carleton-Gloucester who worked on the political process, who supported me; those who worked for the other candidates as well. That's what makes our democratic process work so well, those who do take time to get involved in the election of individuals to represent them.

I would also like to take an opportunity to recognize the individual who was there before me, Mr Gilles Morin, who was a member of the Liberal Party. He had served Carleton East and his constituents from 1985 to 1999. Mr Morin served the government of the day in many different capacities: as Deputy Speaker of the Legislative Assembly and minister for senior citizen's affairs. He has gone on to greener pastures, and I wish him well on his future endeavours.

The riding I represent—the boundaries have changed somewhat from what they were for Carleton East. With the boundary realignment, they now include the urban portion of the city of Cumberland and a good portion of the city of Gloucester outside the greenbelt in the nation's capital. For those of you who have maybe never been there, we have this real jewel, the greenbelt that goes around the inner core, and in some respects it is a real jewel. In some respects it is a real pain in the neck when you try to get services to cross those boundaries.

Within the riding of Carleton-Gloucester, it has been one of the fastest-growing communities, not only in this province but in the country, during the 1980s. I was very pleased to be part of that, as councillor with the city of Cumberland and then as mayor for the past nine years. Over the last nine years, in talking to residents and as our community grows, it seemed that the economic downturn we had experienced—there just seemed to be no end to it. When you talked to people with small businesses and residents, it seemed to be coupled with a tremendous

deluge of ever-increasing red tape and bureaucracy in all aspects of our lives. As mayor, I was very fortunate to have a council that was trying to cut through some of the red tape and some of the bureaucracy that prevented people from doing what they would like to do in their communities. That is certainly something that has carried on to this level, with this government.

1730

Going back to my riding for a moment, just to give you some sort of setting so you have an idea of the type of community that it is, it is a community that has a rich mixture of anglophone and francophone residents; a new, rapidly growing suburban area and a large rural area that has a rich heritage, which is not contained within the riding boundaries of Carleton-Gloucester but goes across this province, of our forefathers who cleared the land for those of us to enjoy in future years.

When you look back to some of your ancestors and some of the difficulties and challenges they had to make a better life that we enjoy today, despite the bumps and potholes that we hit in the road from time to time, it's incumbent upon us to ensure that we put in place a structure that has promise for the future, that has a vision for the future, that ensures there will be prosperity, that there is hope there will be a job for your children and they will be educated in a proper atmosphere, that will meet the challenges of our growth and development and new technologies as the human race keeps pushing the envelope on technology.

It's incumbent upon us to make sure that we have a health system that is going to look after those of us in my age group, which is the bulge in the population—as we get older, there are increased costs in health care—and that we're able to look after our seniors and our aging population so that it doesn't become a burden that takes away from some of the other things we have to do and we have to respond to in our community. That's something this government has addressed.

These are very similar issues that I heard as mayor in a community that is young, rapidly growing, grappling with changes in technology, grappling with high costs, rules, regulations, red tape. As I went around the municipality—and I was in small business myself at one point—it was getting to the point where you spent more time filling out papers and responding to some government agency than you spent doing the job where you made the money to pay the bills. It got a little top-heavy and it capsized.

We're just celebrating Small Business Week and we know that it's small business that creates most of the employment in this province and this country. We have to be able to facilitate the survival of small business so that our children can get jobs, so that our friends, our neighbours, our relatives can have jobs.

We all can't be PhDs, we all can't be academics, scientists, computer experts. There are many of us who just want to look after our families, to go out and make a living, work from one end of the day to the other, come

home with a paycheque and enjoy a quality of life and spend some time with our families.

This government has created an atmosphere and has continued to create an atmosphere so that we will have those opportunities in the future. The 572,000 jobs that have been created have been referred to a countless number of times. The job has only begun. We've committed to 825,000 jobs over the next five years. That is no small feat. The job is not over, it has only begun.

That has a small comparison to what I experienced in Cumberland-Gloucester during the 1980s. In Cumberland in particular we went from a population of 15,000 to over 51,000, as it is today. That's just in the city of Cumberland.

There's a community called Orleans that is in the riding of Carleton-Gloucester. It straddles the boundaries between the city of Cumberland and the city of Gloucester. It was a small village back in the 1960s. The regional official plan in the late 1980s said it would be a community that would grow to 32,000. It's 80,000, and in 12 years it will be 130,000 population. Of course the trick is to try to balance the jobs with the growth so people can live, work and play in the same community. We've got to learn how to maximize our infrastructure—water, sewer, transit, roads—so that we become more efficient in how we plan our communities. That is a constant challenge.

I mentioned earlier on that we have diverse cultural activity in our community, with the francophone and anglophone population. That's something we're very proud of, the cultural and linguistic diversity that is a strength, and it demonstrates harmony and an enriched appreciation for the interests, the opinions and the goals of all residents.

I think one of the greatest compliments that can be paid to a community I heard time and time again as the mayor of Cumberland. Our community, over the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, was a very transient community. People were working in the federal government or the RCMP or the military. They'd move in, be there for two or three years and then move on to other places, and some of them world travellers, not originally from the Carleton-Gloucester riding. But when they retire, they come back and that's where they retire. To me, that is a tremendous testimony to a community.

It's people who have gone through our community and, to a person, have got involved in our community, whether it's in Scouts, the Lions Club, Optimists, those kinds of things. These are the real hearts of our community, and they got involved and helped the community grow, and their families got involved. In a number of cases where we didn't have the financial capability to put in the facilities that many communities with a large commercial tax base enjoy, we had to become innovative in how we did things. Those initiatives were undertaken by our residents.

That, I believe, is one of the roles we play as government, whether it's municipal, provincial or federal. We have to be facilitators to empower the people back in our

own communities to do some of the things. We've become so encumbered in red tape and bureaucracy that we've got rules to prevent us from doing the right thing. You go to do it and you trip over something and you can't do it. "Yes, it's the right thing to do, but I'm sorry, we've got this rule, and if you don't like it, you've got to change the rule." Then we're off on another two-year consultation process to try and get something changed. We witness that day in and day out through government agencies. We consult till the cows come home.

If you've noticed, in my experience, in some of the structured process we have—yes, we want to consult; we want to hear from everybody. But over the last 10 or 15 years, particularly in some of the processes, when we have people come in we lead them to believe that when this process is over, everyone will be happy, and we know that's not the case. Rather than, "Yes, we want to hear your comments, yes, we want to—"

Interjection.

Mr Coburn: I'm over my limit? I'm sorry, Mr Speaker. I went over my time. I just want to go through one thing very quickly. I apologize. I lost track of time. It's just like in the council chamber, only I got to call the shots there.

Going back to the complexities we have in our processes, I think we owe it to our public to be responsible, that yes, we have a process and we want to hear what you have to say, but we have to make decisions and move things along because there is an affordability factor; there's a cost to everything. If we waste money, that takes money away from doing some of the other things the members opposite are concerned about, that we're all concerned about, as a matter of fact.

1740

I'd just like to mention that my community of Carleton-Gloucester is no different than some of the others throughout Ontario. We have our heroes, ordinary people doing extraordinary things. I was very pleased, just this past Monday, to be sitting in the front foyer of the provincial Legislature when the Honourable Hilary Weston bestowed the Order of Ontario on Miss Winnie Leuszler from Orleans. Do you want to hear a couple of firsts? This lady was the first Canadian to swim the English Channel. She was the first female baseball umpire, in 1957. Here's something I found rather interesting: She was the first female vice-president of the men's senior softball league, in 1952.

Hon Rob Sampson (Minister of Correctional Services): She's a baseball fan. What does she think of Roger Clemens?

Mr Coburn: I must ask her when I visit her next week. She has been recognized by the Canadian military and the Ontario Swimming Hall of Fame for her contribution.

We have another lady who was recognized on June 30 in our community as well, Miss Ivana Baldelli, who received the medal for good citizenship. This is a prestigious award that recognizes acts of generosity and kindness during her many years of volunteer work with

countless organizations over the years. The list goes on. We all have tales of people who give generously of their time.

Having been involved in municipal politics, it was quite a decision for me to run for provincial politics. One of the reasons that really struck a chord with me was that I felt, for the first time in a long time, this was a government that actually did what they said they were going to do; a government that wanted to decrease taxes, cut red tape; a government that wanted a better future for all Ontarians; a government that had the courage to step up and take the initiative to refocus our priorities in education so that more money is spent in the classroom, so that more money is available to meet the needs of our seniors and all users of the health care system and still be on track to balance the budget in 2000-01; a government that understood that the status quo was not good enough for the residents of Ontario if we were to have a strong and prosperous future. Today, I am very proud to stand here and be part of this team on behalf of the residents of Carleton-Gloucester.

Mr Sergio: I wish to congratulate the member for Carleton-Gloucester not only on his welcome here as an elected member on behalf of his community but also on the presentation he has made in the House, his maiden speech. I wish him well as we move on in the next term of office here.

Mr Hastings: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I understand that we have a rotation in the House now on question period and all others. I thought the member for Guelph-Wellington should be up next.

The Speaker: Would the member take his seat.

Mr Hastings: It is a point of order.

The Speaker: I didn't realize there were two minutes left. I thought he was finished on the clock. I apologize. With your indulgence, we could go the final two minutes and then do the rotations. That was my error, and I apologize. It was a point of order. The member for Etobicoke North is correct. The member for Guelph, two minutes.

The Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mrs Brenda Elliott (Guelph-Wellington): Since this is my first opportunity to speak as we return to the Legislature, I would like to take a moment to congratulate all the new members, to welcome them and also to congratulate my colleagues who are returning once again with me.

It is a pleasure to be here. We are all here for the reason that we want to serve and do the best we can for our constituents. Here on the government side, through the throne speech, we've made it very clear what our priority is in this next term, and that is to do what we can to provide the leadership required to keep Ontario thriving.

Perhaps my colleagues would be interested: I was at an opening of a new corporate headquarters in my riding, a company called Linamar. This is a company that was begun 33 years ago by a gentleman in his garage. He has, in the last year or so, increased the number of sub-companies in his business from 19 to 28. He is now

manufacturing in four countries. He is employing almost 8,500 people. His sales are up to over a billion dollars.

When I spoke to him and congratulated him about his growth and his thriving business, he was very clear that a businessman like this appreciates reliable government. They appreciate responsible government. They appreciate a predictable environment that is conducive for them to do business. That's very important to our government because we know that entrepreneurs like Frank Hasenfratz, who owns Linamar, can't thrive in this province unless we provide the kind of climate for economic growth that they need.

The throne speech outlined a number of initiatives that we're anxious to get started on in this term. The one thing I would say to all my voters in Guelph-Wellington: You know from seeing us that we've made promises and we've learned to keep our promises.

Mr Kwinter: Before I do anything, I just want to thank my colleague from York West for allowing me to respond to the member from Guelph-Wellington.

When I was the Minister of Industry, Trade and Technology, I had the privilege of visiting Mr Frank Hasenfratz at Linamar and presenting him with a contribution from the government of several millions of dollars. That was close to 13 years ago. That was the basis for the success—among other things; I'm not trying to say that was the only thing. But the point is they became a very successful company.

This government, by its policy, would have turned him down. They would have turned him down. The former minister in the last Parliament said to me, "It is not the role of government to help business, only to help the business climate." I'm saying to you that Ford Motor Co got its van plant and its paint plant because of our contribution. Frank Hasenfratz at Linamar is the same thing. What you should do is look back at those examples and make sure that we continue to do those things so that we can have the growth in the economy, have the type of employment that they create. That is what it's all about.

My colleague, I'm sure, will want to say something.

Mr Sergio: Just to take the rest of my time, I'm pleased to respond to the member who, even though she was on for two minutes, did that on one foot. I think that doesn't happen too often. Since I only have a few seconds left, I want again to congratulate the member. I hope he will be very watchful of the goings-on within the PC caucus and report back, not only to the House, but to his constituents, and I'm sure he will be doing that in the next session.

Ms Martel: I want to congratulate the member for Carleton-Gloucester on his maiden speech here, and I want to say to the member from Guelph-Wellington that I would have liked to have heard more about what you had to say. You can thank your own colleague for being cut off. Maybe you can get in the rotation some other day.

Let me just say that both members made the point, which I will emphasize, that the throne speech represents the priorities of this government. So let me say from this perspective that my concern is that there was so little, if

anything, said with respect to what this government's priorities are for those most vulnerable in our society. I'm referring both to the homeless in our communities and to our children.

I deeply regret, as I've reviewed the throne speech several times now, that this government has so little to say about two issues which I think are very important, because they speak to who we are as a society and they certainly speak to who we are going to be with respect to how we treat our kids and where we want them to be and where they are going to end up if we don't give them the kinds of supports they need.

A child in the gallery cried out.

Ms Martel: I say again that I would have expected that in the throne speech, for example, the government would have reiterated, when they were talking about the homeless, its own commitment to set aside government land on which to build affordable housing. It was the former Minister of Community and Social Services who made that commitment only a few short months ago in this Legislature. There was nothing in the throne speech, there was nothing in the most recent announcement that the Chair of Management Board made with respect to the disposition of crown assets and crown land.

I would have expected the government to talk about, very specifically, the recommendations they were going to follow with respect to Dr Fraser Mustard, and again there was nothing.

I say to the government, get your priorities straight. We are judged on the basis of how we treat our most vulnerable, and there was nothing in the throne speech about those things.

1750

Hon Frank Klees (Minister without Portfolio): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I just want to draw to your attention that the member from Kenora-Rainy River is taking it to great lengths to demonstrate the need for day care in this province. We want to welcome him and his children in the gallery.

The Speaker: It isn't a point of order, but I must admit, looking up there was one of the reasons I missed the two minutes. The member for Scarborough Southwest.

Mr Newman: It is my pleasure to comment on the two speeches here today by the member for Carleton-Gloucester and the member for Guelph-Wellington. I think the member for Guelph-Wellington hit on all the points of the throne speech in her brief period speaking here today.

I've had the opportunity to work with the member for Carleton-Gloucester. He also serves as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. As the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health, we are co-chairs on the Land Ambulance Implementation Steering Committee. I've had the opportunity to work with him and I want to say how hard he's been working on that.

Also, you could hear in his speech how much he cares about his community. Today in question period, he asked

a question the Minister of Finance that dealt with the Ottawa Senators, obviously near and dear to him and his community, and I think he got a response that was quite favourable. In fact, when he served as the mayor of Cumberland—I understand from the former parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Labour that the mayor of Cumberland, now the MPP for Carleton-Gloucester, worked hard to ensure that the Fairness is a Two-Way Street bill was brought forward. He wanted to ensure that workers in his community had equal access to Quebec construction sites as Quebec construction workers had in Ontario.

I think the people of Carleton-Gloucester are well served in having the member as their MPP. I think I'll wrap up my comments with that.

Mr Bradley: I know the members didn't have sufficient time, because there isn't enough time in this Legislature, to deal with all issues, to deal with the situation with Gallaher Paper in Thorold, Ontario, where a number of people now have occupied the building because they want to see this place continue to operate. There is some question that whoever buys the mill may simply close it down and sell the assets. It is to be hoped, and I know all members, regardless of their political party in this House, will want to ensure that we try to persuade the banks, or the receiver in the particular case, to select a person or an organization or a company, in other words a buyer, who will continue to operate the mill.

These are good jobs; they're well-paid jobs in the community, so they have a wonderful spinoff effect. This has been an efficient operation over the years. I know there are many challenges facing that industry right across the country and indeed internationally. I know the Premier has indicated that his intervention, he hopes, will be of some assistance as well. It is a multi-party experience in this case. The member for Niagara Centre raised the issue in the House, as the plant is in his riding. There was an appeal to the Premier to be of some assistance. I think calls have gone from the office of the government to try to persuade the receiver to choose someone who will continue to operate that plant. I know the members who made their speeches from two different

parts of Ontario, from the Guelph area and the Ottawa area, both would be supportive of seeing this plant continue to operate and the efforts of people of all parties to be successful in this regard.

The Speaker: It now being almost 6 of the clock—
Interjection.

The Speaker: I'm sorry. I apologize again. The member for Carleton-Gloucester has response time.

Mr Coburn: I just want to once again apologize to my colleague for not keeping a closer eye on the clock. I guess that's one of the major criteria in this place, that you keep a close eye on the clock.

Mr Bradley: Never apologize for that.

Mr Coburn: I'm told that there are masters within this place too that you should watch and you'll learn all the tricks of the trade.

There's one other item that I'd like to touch on that I think is important in our society today. I talked a bit about empowerment, that we have the confidence that people will do the right thing. I think that's what we're trying to do by trying to get rid of some of this red tape. We have a Red Tape Commission, a watchdog that will evaluate all of our legislation. I think that's an extremely important function that prevents us from making decisions that are not common sense.

I'd like to talk about one partnership, and it has to do with one of the members opposite, in Prescott-Russell, Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde, who worked with me and all of the municipal colleagues up and down both sides of the Ottawa River. We set up the Ottawa River committee in 1990. Mr Lalonde was chair of that and I was vice-chair. It provided jobs and initiatives to clean up that river, and the economic spinoff from that has been tremendous. That was an initiative that was done that created employment. It's those kinds of things that there is plenty of opportunity for in this province. If we just unburden ourselves of some of the rules and regulations, we can make some things happen that will create additional employment for the average, ordinary Ontarian.

The Speaker: It now being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 on Monday.

The House adjourned at 1757

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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		York South-Weston / York Sud-Weston	Cordiano, Joseph (L)
		York West / -Ouest	Sergio, Mario (L)

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First Session, 37th Parliament

Assemblée législative
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Première session, 37^e législature

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Journal des débats (Hansard)

Monday 1 November 1999

Lundi 1^{er} novembre 1999

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 1 November 1999

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 1^{er} novembre 1999

*The House met at 1331.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ANTHONY PETER TOLDO

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): Last Monday my friend and constituent Anthony Peter Toldo of Tecumseh, Ontario, was awarded the Order of Ontario.

Mr Toldo owns manufacturing plants in three countries and employs more than 1,200 people.

Born in San Fiore province in Italy, Mr Toldo started a bathroom fittings company in Tilbury. In 1980, he turned entrepreneur again and formed Centoco Manufacturing Ltd in Tilbury near Windsor to make plastic plumbing fixtures. In 1985, he built a third plant in Windsor and moved all the bathroom fittings production to Tilbury to concentrate on making automotive steering wheels there. In 1988, he created the Toldo Group of companies, which manufacture a wide range of products, including fast-food restaurant furniture.

In 1997, Mr Toldo donated \$1 million to the Windsor Regional Cancer Centre to purchase medical equipment and to help restore its building. In 1998, he gave \$325,000 to the same centre for the treatment of prostate cancer and contributed \$100,000 towards a building for the Italian senior citizens' centre of Windsor. In this year alone, Mr Toldo has donated more than \$600,000 to Windsor area hospitals.

Mr Speaker, I know I speak on your behalf and on behalf of all Ontarians, particularly people who live in my community, in saying congratulations to Mr Toldo on the Order of Ontario and, more important, a very special thanks for his enormous generosity and contributions to our community.

JOHN JAMES

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): Last week my community in Durham lost a very special individual. Mr John James, in his 89th year, passed away.

John James was well known to many in the community. He was the former publisher of one of our local newspapers, the Canadian Statesman, and a long-time reporter of many community events. Johnny, as he was fondly known, was also a Liberal member of Parliament from 1949 to 1957, but he will be best remembered for

his passionate and generous support of the community of Bowmanville.

John James was born in Bowmanville in 1911. John's grandfather bought the Canadian Statesman in 1854. It was later taken over by his father and uncle, and Johnny himself assumed the reins in 1957. After 145 years of family ownership, the paper was sold earlier this year to Metroland Printing and Publishing Ltd.

Johnny James was a veteran of World War II, having served in the Midland regiment before transferring to the Directorate of Military Intelligence in Ottawa. He held many important responsibilities, rising to the rank of captain and being in charge of the security section in England, France, Belgium and the Netherlands.

Johnny James will be remembered for many of his community events. On a lighter note, he will also be remembered by many constituents for being present at almost every community event with his notebook and camera at his shoulder.

I would like to extend my deepest sympathies to his family, especially his wife, Dorothy, who remains a strength in the community; their children, John and his wife Linda, Robert, Rick and his wife Kim; as well as to eight grandchildren. I would like Johnny's family to know that my thoughts and prayers are with them at this difficult time. John James truly helped make our community a better place to work.

SPECIAL EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): My comments are for the Minister of Education. Minister, you will know that special-needs students are being denied services they need to reach their full potential as a result of government freezing of the intensive support amount grant. Even the government apologist, the Education Improvement Commission, has been forced to admit that special-needs students have been "adversely affected" by the funding formula.

Ontario schools are short \$100 million for special education services. In my riding of Essex, the Windsor-Essex Catholic District School Board estimates a shortfall of \$2 million. The Greater Essex County District School Board will fall short by \$2.5 million.

To quote the Greater Essex County District School Board special education advisory committee: "The community is struggling to find funding for adequate services

for students requiring children's mental health facilities. Many students are returning to their community schools."

Simply put, in the words of the Windsor-Essex Catholic District School Board superintendent of education, "There is no funding for students who register in the boards from provincial institutions or pre-school."

Last week, in answer to a question in this House brought by our education critic, you bragged about spending more money on special education per pupil but said nothing about the intensive support amount, which has been frozen.

Last Thursday, I spent an evening at Villanova high school in LaSalle. A forum on special education funding issues was held for parents and educators of children with special needs. I can tell you, Minister, these parents of kids in need of intensive support don't believe you and they don't trust you to deliver.

ALICE KING SCULTHORPE

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): I rise in the House today to recognize the efforts of Mrs Alice King Sculthorpe, a long-time resident of the town of Port Hope, and to congratulate her on receiving the Order of Ontario on October 25, 1999.

Since moving to Port Hope in 1949, Mrs Sculthorpe has played an important role in preserving the community's heritage buildings and landmarks. Her unmatched enthusiasm and persistence led to her position as director of the Capital Theatre Heritage Foundation, where she helped raise \$1.5 million to convert the old movie house into a majestic theatre for live performances.

It is her tremendous passion for Port Hope's Walton Street heritage district that has made it one of Canada's best 19th century streetscapes. She has organized the restoration of Port Hope's historic railway station, served two separate terms as president of the Architectural Conservancy of Ontario, and served on the local architectural conservation advisory committee. In the early 1990s, she personally helped to plant more than 200 trees in Port Hope as part of the Green Streets Canada program.

It is most assuredly the appreciation, the dedication and the love for her community that make Mrs Alice King Sculthorpe herself a part of Port Hope's history.

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): Last week, St Joseph's Hospital in Brantford received a letter from the assistant Deputy Minister of Health stating that the Health Services Restructuring Commission has recommended to the Minister of Health that closure option A be adopted with regard to restructuring in Brant county.

Option A, as described by your ministry, "involves interim transfer of some program activities to the Willett Hospital" in Paris, interim "transfer of some chronic patients ... to Brantford General Hospital prior to moving all programs to their final location at BGH."

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Option B, preferred by St Joe's and all physician groups, simply requests no transfer of patients until the construction to house both services and provisions for patients is completed by the year 2001.

In addition, in this government's zeal to save money, the Minister of Health has not addressed a new proposal put forward by a joint submission of St Joseph's in Brantford and Hamilton and McMaster University, to create a partnership and have St Joseph's act as a teaching facility and maintain complex continuing care, rehabilitation and palliative care.

This proposal is providing the government with an opportunity to save millions of dollars on strained health care, save and solve the doctor shortage in our riding, and forge a new partnership between two leading-edge health practitioners.

I call on the Minister of Health to personally review the decision, as she promised, because of the hardship on my riding by possibly having to transfer services twice across the riding and to personally intervene into the facility to ensure that Brantford and Ontario are better served.

OAK RIDGES MORaine

Ms Marilyn Churley (Broadview-Greenwood): This morning I attended a very important press conference put on by the Federation of Ontarian Naturalists, Save the Oak Ridges Moraine Coalition, the Uxbridge Conservation Association, the Kettle Lakes Coalition and Earthroots, assisted by the Sierra legal defence fund.

In all the controversy over the scandal that's erupted around this issue, we must not lose sight of the urgent need to protect this environmentally sensitive land. This group of conservationists met this morning with the press to tell them that they have a very practical plan which they put forward today to protect this sensitive area.

What they've called for today is tough land-use planning controls, a freeze on all public spending related to moraine development, directing part of the SuperBuild Growth Fund to park creation, and surcharges on proposed moraine developments.

This is nothing new. In 1994, the NDP government had declared a provincial interest in this land. There were consultations across the province dealing with these issues and a report was given to our government. It's been sitting and gathering dust by this government for the past five years.

Now the time has come for this government to act and to act immediately. The work has already been done.

EILEEN McGREGOR

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): The Order of Ontario recognizes and honours those who have enriched the lives of others by obtaining the highest standards of excellence and achievement in their respective fields. Eileen McGregor of Peterborough is one of those indiv-

iduals. She has been a pioneer in the community for more than 50 years.

In 1960, she was Peterborough's first female president of the Red Cross and Community Chest and, in 1985, the first female police commissioner.

Through her remarkable achievements, she has not only broken new ground for women but has also made tremendous contributions to education, one of which has been the creation of a bursary for single mothers returning to school to further their education at Sir Sandford Fleming college, where Eileen taught for many years.

While being involved in her community, Mrs McGregor and her husband raised four outstanding children, all of whom are involved heavily in their respective communities and in their chosen professions.

My personal congratulations to Stevie McGregor, as she is affectionately known. You're an example of commitment to all of us.

HIGHWAY 401

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): Last week I stood in this House and renewed my demands for upgrades on Highway 401 between London and Windsor. Since then the highway of death has claimed three more victims.

I want to know exactly what the government is doing to the road. When I drove home I was horrified by some of your recent work. Loose gravel several inches deep has been laid on top of the steep, grassy median, extending several feet into the centre. This looks like a recipe for disaster. Anybody who drops off the pavement would immediately lose control in the soft gravel.

On Friday, according to witnesses, a car near Woodstock hit the gravel, lost control and literally flew through the median and killed two people travelling in the opposite direction.

Yesterday a young man was killed when his car went into the centre median and flipped.

A level paved shoulder on the inside and a centre barrier might have prevented these three deaths.

Moreover, I want to know why loose gravel is being spread into the centre median. There is no improvement, except a narrow, steep median is now more dangerous.

I have 500 safety petitions for Mike Harris, collected by the Chatham Daily News. The CAA has collected 8,000. I have received almost 5,000 from my safety questionnaire. They all call for centre barriers, extra lanes and fully paved, level shoulders on both sides. I repeat, how much public pressure will it take, how many more deaths, before the government listens?

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): I rise today to talk about the problem of doctor distribution in Ontario.

The Mike Harris government has initiated a number of steps to encourage physicians to set up practice in under-

serviced areas. These include, but are not limited to, \$36.4 million annually for alternate payment plans for groups of physicians setting up in underserviced areas; a physician job registry to help match underserviced communities seeking physicians with physicians who want to move to underserviced areas; incentives to doctors, including financial incentive grants ranging from \$15,000 to \$40,000 over four years, to encourage them to practise in underserviced areas; discounted fees for new physicians setting up practice in overserviced areas, to encourage these physicians to work in underserviced areas.

These solutions point out that the problem is one of distribution and not necessarily oversupply. In some areas of the province, their physician-to-patient ratio is 1:3,000; in others, it's 1:600.

Thanks to Blueprint and the member for Cambridge, we will now begin to pay tuition costs for graduating doctors who locate in underserviced areas. This should help, but it may only make a dent in the problem. If this is so, I would call on the Minister of Health to begin to attach geographic zones to all new billing numbers issued in the province. This would guarantee an end to the distribution problem in short order.

MOTIONS

HOUSE Sittings

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Government House Leader): Mr Speaker, I have to be on my best behaviour. My sister-in-law Alice Sterling is here watching me.

I move that pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 pm to 9:30 pm on November 1 and 2, 1999, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Government House Leader): I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

Hon Mr Sterling: I move that notwithstanding order 96(g), the requirement for notice be waived with respect to ballot items 1 and 2.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Government House Leader): I seek

unanimous consent to move two motions without notice regarding committee organization and membership of the coming session.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

Hon Mr Sterling: I move that the membership of the standing committees for this Parliament be as follows:

On the standing committee on estimates: Gilles Bisson, Sean Conway, Alvin Curling, Gerard Kennedy, Frank Mazzilli, Toni Skarica, Gary Stewart, Wayne Wetlaufer;

On the standing committee on finance and economic affairs: Ted Arnott, Marcel Beaubien, David Christopherson, Doug Galt, Monte Kwinter, Tina Molinari, John O'Toole, Gerry Phillips;

On the standing committee on general government: Toby Barrett, Marie Bountrogianni, Ted Chudley, Garfield Dunlop, Dave Levac, Rosario Marchese, Julia Munro, Marilyn Mushinski;

On the standing committee on government agencies: Jim Bradley, Bruce Crozier, Bert Johnson, Morley Kells, Tony Martin, George Smitherman, Joe Spina, Bob Wood;

On the standing committee on justice and social policy: Marcel Beaubien, Michael Bryant, Carl DeFaria, Brenda Elliott, Garry Guzzo, Peter Kormos, Lyn McLeod, Joe Tascona;

On the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly: Marilyn Churley, Brad Clark, Pat Hoy, Jean-Marc Lalonde, Jerry Ouellette, Gary Stewart, Joe Tascona, Wayne Wetlaufer;

On the standing committee on public accounts: John Cleary, Brian Coburn, John Gerretsen, Shelley Martel, Bart Maves, Julia Munro, Marilyn Mushinski, Richard Patten;

On the standing committee on regulations and private bills: Gilles Bisson, Claudette Boyer, Garfield Dunlop, Raminder Gill, John Hastings, Frances Lankin, Tony Ruprecht and David Young.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Mr Sterling has moved—dispense?

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

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COMMITTEE SCHEDULE

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Government House Leader): I move that the following schedule for committee meetings be established for this Parliament:

The standing committee on justice and social policy may meet on Monday and Tuesday afternoons following routine proceedings; the standing committee on general government may meet on Monday and Wednesday afternoons following routine proceedings; the standing committee on estimates may meet on Tuesday and Wednesday afternoons following routine proceedings; the standing committee on government agencies may meet on Wednesday mornings; the standing committee on

regulations and private bills may meet on Wednesday mornings; the standing committee on finance and economic affairs may meet on Thursday mornings and Thursday afternoons following routine proceedings; the standing committee on public accounts may meet on Thursday mornings; the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly may meet Thursday afternoons following routine proceedings; and that for the purposes of the two-thirds majority required under standing order 124(c), that number be set at five; and that the standing committee on general government be authorized to consider the matter of the appointment of the Environmental Commissioner and to report to the House its recommended candidate for the appointment as Environmental Commissioner; and that the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly be authorized to consider the matter of the appointment of the Ontario Ombudsman and to report to the House its recommended candidate for the appointment as Ontario Ombudsman.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Mr Sterling has moved—dispense?

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Hon Mr Sterling: I believe I have unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding some additional amendments to the standing orders.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: We did intend to have unanimous consent. We didn't realize he was going to raise it today, and we have not reviewed them.

Hon Mr Sterling: Speaker, I'll withdraw. We can do this tomorrow.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

CRIME PREVENTION WEEK

Hon Rob Sampson (Minister of Correctional Services): I'm pleased to announce that today marks the beginning of Crime Prevention Week.

Now, while crime prevention is a year-round activity, it's important to recognize the contribution of our police services and to heighten the awareness of how each of us can work together to make Ontario communities safer.

Everyone in Ontario has the right to be safe from crime. We should be able to walk in our own neighbourhoods, use public transit, live in our homes and send our children to school free from the fear of criminals.

The involvement of each individual in neighbourhoods across Ontario continues to be the most powerful force in reducing crime. Police and community organizations are demonstrating the commitment of Ontarians towards making our communities safe.

During Crime Prevention Week, we salute and encourage people from across the province to get involved in

addressing crime prevention in their own communities. Working together, we can all make a difference in the quality of life in Ontario.

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): On the surface, I would say to the honourable member, there's no question that the members on this side of the House support the concept and the idea and the thrust of what he's saying. However, there are some concerns that I must raise, and those concerns are pretty obvious.

There have been implications by previous solicitors general and by other members on that side that there would be a tendency towards privatizing the police service. This, in my opinion—and it's a humble opinion at this moment, because I haven't had enough time to discuss and to delve into the real workings of the police force. But I want to say at the outset that I definitely support the concept that everyone is responsible for policing—everyone. We have been told by police officers time and time again that all of us are responsible for making sure that we take a bite out of crime.

I want this government to stand in its place and say that it will not privatize policing. They have been challenged time and time again to do so—not a word. They have been challenged to make those statements in public, in private to the OPP, in private to the municipal forces. They have not done so.

We have had reports in the media of a private firm doing a speed chase of over 120 kilometres an hour, both vehicles blowing through stop signs, blowing through stoplights in the middle of a community. Properly trained police officers would have known to turn that one off; the security firm did not, putting lives in danger—not acceptable.

The other thing I want to bring up is that this is, and should be, considered a threat to public safety, because if this ministry is not willing to subject itself to the scrutiny of this side by making it clear that we do not accept and the public and the police do not accept privatizing the police force, we're in deep trouble.

Let's lay the blame where it belongs: downloading, the fact that municipalities are now being charged with having the finances to do those things. It's not acceptable that this government is usurping its responsibility to provide public policing.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, and I share with Mr Lalonde.

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): Mr Minister, how can you declare this week Crime Prevention Week, as in the throne speech there was no mention of crime prevention? Also, since 1995, this government has done nothing to improve crime prevention in our communities.

When the Tories first came to power in 1995, they promised to redirect funding to supervision programs. At that time, Ontario parole and probation officers reported the highest caseloads in the country, with 112 cases per officer. The national average was 72. More than 80,000 people are now on parole every day in Ontario. Instead of reduced caseloads, officers are now handling 117 cases per officer.

Despite predictions that the offender population will increase by over 2% per year, only 0.05% of your budget is dedicated to training, and it calls for a zero increase in the staffing complement. This is a recipe for disaster. It is unacceptable.

These probation officers handle 87% of the offending population within the community. We commend the probation officers for their hard work, given the lack of support from this government. We call on you to put money behind the 1995 election promise you made, or is this another shallow promise?

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): The minister should know that the report that was commissioned by your government on early childhood development says clearly, with research, that if you want to make a contribution to crime prevention, one of the things you should be doing is paying attention to the early years of children in our society, because a lot of these things are genetic and a lot of these things are based on the abuse of children, are based on the neglect of children and are based on the poor nurturing that we have for many of our children. I suggest that you should begin to look in terms of prevention in this area.

1400

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): It's interesting that the Minister of Correctional Services makes this announcement today. I understand why neither the Attorney General nor the Solicitor General would want to, because clearly this is the sort of fluff that is so typical of a government that maintains a policy of depolicing our provinces and underresourcing police forces that puts communities at risk and peril and puts cops at risk and peril. We have the lowest number of police officers per capita that this province has experienced in the last 10 years. Our police forces are seriously underresourced.

If you want to talk about crime prevention, you ought to be talking about ensuring that police services boards have adequate resources, that communities have adequate resources, to have cops out there on the street doing the job that good cops in this province want to do. Response times have become more and more protracted, longer and longer.

You and your government's policy of downloading and quite frankly abandoning police forces has nurtured the option 4 program. You have done nothing in response to any number of observations of the fact that cops are out there doing fundraising. You should be familiar with option 4 because it has been raised in this Legislature more than once. Quite frankly, police officers don't like doing it, because they know that there are more important things for them to do, police services boards wish they didn't have to do it, but valuable police time is spent out there in fishing holes.

You understand how option 4 works. If you've got the cash, you show up at the police station within 48 hours, no cheques, exact change, you pay off the police services board to the tune of—what is it?—\$50 or \$60 and the ticket is torn up. What happens is that police forces are forced to do this because they are underresourced.

In Niagara region, you've got a police force where morale has dropped so low that they're in the course of conducting a secret ballot by way of a vote of non-confidence in their chief of police. That's a police force that, as you should know, has been ravaged by some very difficult history over the course of the last 20 and 30 years, and the last thing it needs is a government that undermines it every step of the way. I talked to a police officer at Niagara just recently who opened his trunk and showed me the spike belt that had been installed in the trunk of his car, packed up onto the underside of the hood. Every police cruiser in Niagara now has a spike belt; not one police officer has received a minute of training in how to use them or the circumstances under which they are to be utilized. The police officer, who is an experienced police officer whom I've known for a number of years and who is very competent, explained to me he isn't quite sure how to even get the spike belt out of the container. Little good it's going to do him or other cops to have spike belts if this government won't finance police services boards so that police officers can receive adequate training.

If you want to talk about crime prevention, why don't you talk and why didn't your throne speech talk about a response to the disastrous judgment condemning your government's Victims' Bill of Rights, which the courts found had little to do with victims and absolutely nothing to do with rights and was more noteworthy in its breach, in its violation, than in any compliance with it?

If you want to talk about crime prevention, Mr Sampson, why don't you talk about making sure that crown attorneys and their offices have adequate resources so they can prepare for bail hearings, so they can prepare adequately for trial, so they can properly screen cases, so they can discuss cases with crown witnesses before the morning of the trial, if that, and why don't you take a look at some of the courts in this city alone—Old City Hall among others—and take a look at the incredible backlogs and the huge risk of injustice being applied every step of the way?

You have touted your so-called Christopher's Law, your child abuse registry, yet it does nothing to address the fact that agencies like Big Brothers, agencies like Boy Scouts and Girl Guides have to pay user fees now when, by way of an application by a volunteer, they seek out whether or not that person has a criminal record.

If you're going to talk about crime prevention, why aren't you telling police forces in this province that they can't charge volunteer agencies \$40, \$50 and \$60 a pop to do criminal record searches? If you want to talk about prevention of crime, why aren't you talking about your government's total indifference to the incredible crime of homelessness, why aren't you talking about your government's disdain for the poor, and why aren't you talking about your government's attack on the incredible crime of child poverty? You folks want to talk a big game when it comes to law and order, but at the end of the day the fact is you not only don't deliver, but you've undermined police forces, you've undermined commun-

ities that have been trying to build stronger, healthier, safer communities, and at the end of the day you're the criminal's best friend.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I draw the members' attention to the west gallery. We are joined today by Margaret Harrington, the former member for Niagara Falls.

WIFE ASSAULT PREVENTION MONTH

MOIS DE PRÉVENTION DE LA VIOLENCE CONJUGALE

Hon Helen Johns (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, minister responsible for seniors and women): Mr Speaker, I request unanimous consent so that one member from each caucus may rise and speak about Wife Assault Prevention Month.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it agreed? Agreed.

Hon Mrs Johns: As the minister responsible for women's issues, I am pleased to rise in the House today to speak about the serious problem of wife assault and domestic violence. This month has been designated Wife Assault Prevention Month. This presents us with an opportunity to reflect on an all-too-common crime that hurts every one of us in this chamber.

This government will not tolerate domestic violence, nor should any of us tolerate it. Across Ontario, the government spends \$100 million annually on programs and services that address violence against women. The effects of domestic violence ripple through society, leaving children at risk, families in anguish and women in crisis.

The Blueprint outlines our approach to domestic violence. Our government was the first to create special courts dedicated to domestic violence cases. As a sign of our continued commitment in this regard, we have expanded their number. We are also working towards the implementation of our Blueprint commitments to prevent domestic violence.

With our community, volunteer and private sector partners, this government is taking an active role in addressing and preventing violence against women and their children. Since our government announced our Agenda for Action violence prevention strategy in 1997, more than 40 new initiatives have helped women in crisis to get the help they need when they need it.

As the minister responsible for women's issues, I am working closely with my colleagues in nine other ministries to ensure that violence prevention initiatives across government are coordinated and that they're effective. Last week my colleague the Solicitor General, David Tsubouchi, and I launched a special Crime Stoppers campaign. This month-long radio and television campaign will raise awareness by informing Ontarians that domestic violence can now be reported anonymously through Crime Stoppers. That's not to say that if there's

an act of violence happening at the present time we should call Crime Stoppers; we should call 911. But it's very important for people to get involved and help women who are having violence against them. Ontarians have the right to feel safe in their communities, in their workplaces and in their homes.

Through improved training, children's aid society workers will be able to respond more effectively to cases involving domestic violence. In addition, this measure will help improve links between shelters for abused women and children's aid societies.

One of the real tragedies of women's abuse, of course, is the children who are involved in it. Our government will expand a school-based service program to help children who have witnessed abuse. The program, involving 65 school boards across the province, includes violence prevention education for students and staff as well as direct services for the kids.

To support victims of domestic violence and to hold abusers accountable, our government has created Canada's most extensive violence court system.

Preventing violence against women is everyone's responsibility, and we all need to do our part. I am pleased to note that the majority of the recommendations from the May-Iles inquest have been implemented or are in the process of being implemented, and in fact the chief coroner has said he is pleased with the responses and changes that have resulted from the jury's recommendations.

During Wife Assault Prevention Month, I urge my colleagues here in this room and my friends across the province of Ontario to get involved in violence prevention events in each of their communities.

1410

Our efforts to end domestic violence and keep our communities safe don't end with these programs and initiatives I've talked about today. Our government, together with the community, volunteers and the private sector, has to take action. We have to all be responsible. Each one of us has to play a role in ending domestic violence. It's against the law. It's everyone's responsibility.

Mrs Claudette Boyer (Ottawa-Vanier): It's a pleasure for me to rise and speak on this important issue, Wife Assault Prevention Month. I am grateful to Dalton McGuinty, my leader, for the women's issues portfolio. I know I have the full support of the caucus on the important issues facing women in Ontario society.

I would also like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the presence in the public gallery of a delegation of directors of the Ontario Second Stage Housing Alliance. Through me, they would like to ask the Minister of Community and Social Services, member for Nepean-Carlton, when the funding for shelters and second-stage housing will be restored. I will follow up with a letter on the subject and ask for a reply as soon as possible.

Violence against women is a crime, but a criminal justice response isn't the only answer. Women who have been violated need counselling and compassionate assist-

ance to heal and prepare for a life free of violence and to become financially independent.

No one should overlook the importance of community-based organizations that have committed themselves to serving victims of domestic violence.

In the course of the last four years, a number of initiatives have set back women's ability to respond to domestic violence, such as cutting welfare by 21.6%, restricting eligibility to legal aid funding for family law cases, eliminating funding for new social housing projects and axing rent control.

Laissez-moi vous dire que ces actions causent souvent des ennuis insurmontables aux femmes qui tentent de se sauver de la violence pour leur sécurité et celle de leurs enfants.

Dans mon comté d'Ottawa-Vanier, c'est un sérieux problème pour les francophones. Il y a un ratrappage considérable à faire. Une des maisons d'hébergement refuse des centaines et des centaines de demandes de services, justement à cause de l'absence de financement adéquat et de la pénurie de services en français.

Le crime de violence envers les femmes et les enfants est également une attaque à la dignité humaine. Il est de notre devoir, comme société et comme êtres humains, d'appuyer ces femmes, victimes de violence. Nous devons nous engager afin de prévenir des tragédies et d'aider ces femmes à refaire leur vie.

The most important recommendations of the May-Iles inquest still have not been acted on. Funding has not yet been restored to shelters for abused women and children or to second-stage housing. Experts have repeatedly suggested that women who are violated prefer to turn to community-based organizations for help. These women go where they will be helped to continue to care for their children while figuring out what they will do next.

Did you know that approximately 10,800 women and children seek shelter help per year and that this represents only 8% of the real need? Let's all agree that we can do more for domestic violence so that women can carry on healthy, productive lives free of fear and of violence.

I am hopeful that naming November the Wife Assault Prevention Month will increase awareness of this important issue and will bring about progress in finding solutions to the violence women in Ontario are facing.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-East York): Every November we rise in this House to mark the beginning of Wife Assault Prevention Month. I hope someday there won't have to be a Wife Assault Prevention Month because we will have eradicated violence against women and children. But the sad fact is that the problem has gotten worse, not better. Programs and services that generations of women have built in their communities have suffered enormous blows over the last five years. This issue affects all of us: our families, our communities.

Every year, an average of 40 women are killed by their male partners and ex-partners in this province. Statistics Canada reports that over 29% of women who have been married or in a common-law relationship have been subjected to sexual or physical violence from a

current or former partner. When women do escape violence, the risk of stalking and escalated violence increases. They need a safe place to go and to take their children. Then they face the threat of poverty and homelessness. The fact is that for most women, leaving abusive relationships and protecting their children means raising them in poverty. It must be said that the 22% cut to social assistance dealt another blow to abused women and their children.

I want to share a few statistics with you. In Toronto, the United Way estimates that abused women represent 10% of all users of the general hostel system. In 1996, we know that 8,450 women and their children turned to a Toronto hostel because of spousal abuse or family breakdown, categories that are often used interchangeably by abused women.

There aren't enough places for them in women's emergency shelters because of provincial spending restraints. That means they are out there in the homeless sector in that hostel system without the desperately needed safety and security measures, without help dealing with the devastating effects of being victims of abuse. Callers to the Assaulted Women's Helpline have a 91% chance of getting a busy signal. There are 50,000 calls a year turned away.

We ask women to flee violence. We ask them to protect themselves and their children. But meanwhile, we cut the programs and services they so desperately need if they are to survive.

Earlier today, a group of women who were here with us in the gallery from across this province came to Queen's Park to mark the beginning of Wife Assault Prevention Month. These women are members of the Ontario Second Stage Housing Alliance, women who work day to day providing safe, affordable transitional housing for women escaping violence and for their children. They made it clear that the government's \$2.6-million cut to second-stage housing programs means that abused women and children are no longer getting the help they need to get past the abuse, to develop safety plans, to get training, job counselling and financial advice. In short, the support they need to put their own and their children's lives back together is no longer available. It's just not a priority.

At the same time the government can find \$16 million for pro sports teams, \$2 million for the Ottawa Senators alone, they can't find the \$2.6 million needed to restore programs to women and children fleeing abuse and trying to start a new life.

There's a quote from the May-Iles inquest jury recommendations that I would like to read to you. Minister, you referred to the jury recommendations and to your pride in those that had been implemented. You must know and you must acknowledge that the most important of them has yet to be implemented. I'd like you to listen to the quote:

"As we approach the millennium, we are faced with the reality of the violence occurring to women and children in our society. Until we as a country stand up

and declare zero tolerance, this problem will not only continue, but in this jury's opinion, will escalate. It is our belief that every person has a right to be protected from abuse."

Since the government's cuts, five second-stage housing programs have closed and shelters are turning women away. I hope this month, as we approach the millennium, this government, and each of us as individuals, friends, family and communities, will take the steps necessary to ensure that women no longer have to choose between violence and poverty, between violence and homelessness.

The government is beginning a new Band-Aid. We have a new minister responsible for women's issues. We are approaching a new millennium. I pray that the government will take a new look at providing the support needed for abused women and children to truly be able to begin new lives.

1420

ACCESS TO LEGISLATIVE BUILDING

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): Speaker, on a point of order: I need your help. The Toronto Symphony is coming here tomorrow to play in the grand foyer. But they have been told that if they distribute information outside or even make some speech, it would be a problem and they wouldn't be able to play.

While I understand and have sympathy for the concerns you might have in this matter as Speaker, I hardly think that playing Beethoven inside and distributing some leaflets outside to raise concerns they might have could pose a threat to this assembly, to this government or to the state.

I'm really urging you and hoping that you will be able to solve this matter, and I hope that if you don't have an answer for me now, we can sort that out by the end of the day.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Thank you for raising the point. I was aware of the situation.

As you know, when anybody comes in and performs, we do make sure they're aware of the procedures in terms of handing out literature. I must say, though, probably on behalf of all of members, that having the Toronto Symphony come here tomorrow would indeed be a great honour and we will try to accommodate them. As a result of your highlighting it, I'm sure the members will have a good turnout tomorrow. I thank the member for raising the issue.

ORAL QUESTIONS

MINISTER'S RESIGNATION

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): In the absence of the Premier and the Deputy Premier, I direct my question to the Chair of Management Board.

In the middle of October, the Premier was on record as saying that if he responded to every allegation made about every cabinet minister, frankly he'd have no one left in cabinet. But now we realize that by that point in time there was a veritable scramble going on in the Premier's office over the Steven Gilchrist affair. In fact, we now know the nature of that allegation involved a request for money of \$25,000 per developer in order to have the ear of the minister over the Oak Ridges moraine development. We also know that four top officials of the government were aware of the allegations and the nature of them.

Who were those four senior government members?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I'm not personally aware of the specific details of this matter, nor is the member opposite, I might add. The police are investigating the matter, so I caution members on all sides about making any unsubstantiated or uninformed allegations.

However, I have been informed of the following: On September 27, the Premier's office received a vague complaint by voice mail. The voice mail did not include the name of any individual against whom the complaint was directed. Staff immediately tried to contact the complainant directly. Voice mails were exchanged, but, despite repeated attempts, direct contact was not made until the afternoon of the 28th, when the complainant was reached on a cellphone. However, the complainant indicated that he could not meet until the afternoon of the next day, September 29, which is when the meeting took place.

Immediately following the meeting with the complainant, the Premier's office referred the matter to the Deputy Attorney General and the assistant Deputy Attorney General, criminal law. This referral was consistent with an existing government protocol covering complaints of this nature. According to the protocol, a decision about whether to refer a matter to the police rests with the assistant Deputy Attorney General, criminal law.

Mrs Pupatello: The dates you are giving us are interesting, because the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing did not resign until October 23, and that tells us that at some point after September 8, allegations and directed complaints were made to the Premier's office. We know that four senior government officials were aware of the serious nature of them. We also know that in all that time, the Premier continued to defend his minister, and the minister stayed in that portfolio for, at minimum, a month. All kinds of things would happen in that month's time.

I'd like to ask the Deputy Premier today, who were the top government officials who were aware of what had been going on and what were they doing in that interim four-week period? Were they interfering with what then would become an OPP investigation?

Hon Mr Hodgson: As I've mentioned, I'm not personally aware of the specific details. I have told you that the Premier's office received a voice mail on September

27, they had a meeting with the complainant on the 29th, and then, following the protocol that's in existence, immediately following the meeting with the complainant, the Premier's office referred the matter to the Deputy Attorney General and the assistant Deputy Attorney General, criminal law. As I mentioned, the referral was consistent with the government protocols.

The Premier was out of the office on September 29. On the 30th, when he returned to the office, the Premier was informed by his staff that a complaint involving Minister Gilchrist had been received and referred to the Deputy Attorney General as per the government protocol. This was the first time the Premier was made aware of the complaint. Later that day, the Premier's office and the secretary of cabinet were informed that an assistant Deputy Attorney General had referred the matter to the OPP.

Mrs Pupatello: The Deputy Premier doesn't seem to know very much information, but the rest of the public is coming to know little bits and pieces every day: names of individuals out of the Premier's office who were very much aware of what the allegations were and how serious they were. In fact, we're talking about policy for sale by the Mike Harris government to the highest bidder. Some \$25,000 per developer is the allegation and complaint that was lodged in order to bend the ear of the Minister of Housing in favour, or not, of development.

My question to the Deputy Premier is: Who were those four individuals who knew? The protocols in that office happened much longer down the road when this all became a very public matter. So my question to the Deputy Premier is: Who were those individuals and what transpired in the office of the Deputy Premier in that interim? What did the Premier's office do with information? Don't you agree that a public inquiry into this matter of the Premier's handling of the situation is critical to know that the public interest was defended in that time period?

Hon Mr Hodgson: The police are investigating the matter, so I would caution the members opposite against making any unsubstantiated or uninformed allegations.

I've gone through what happened. On September 27, the Premier's office received a voice mail. They tried to contact the person who lodged the complaint. They finally got hold of him on a cellphone. They met on September 29. Immediately after that meeting, according to the protocols that exist in the government, they contacted the Attorney General's office and it was referred to the Deputy Attorney General, criminal law division, Mr Segal. At that time, it was recommended by the Deputy Attorney General, criminal law, that the matter be referred to the OPP. Those are the facts as I know them.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): New question, the member for Windsor West.

Mrs Pupatello: To the same Deputy Premier today: We're very curious about these dates, because lots has transpired since this became very public. What we're curious to know about is what transpired before the public knew that an investigation was even going on.

There was a file that was turned over from the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to the Minister of the Environment. When exactly was that file turned over to that minister? Was it at the same time as the Premier was saying that this is a very trivial matter and that there are allegations all the time against a minister of every description in the cabinet?

We know now that at that time the Premier's office was scrambling, that four senior government officials were aware of it. We know now that the Attorney General received the file at some point and turned it over, serious as it was, to the OPP. When did the Minister of the Environment receive the file regarding the Oak Ridges moraine?

1430

Hon Mr Hodgson: As I mentioned, on the 29th, members of the Premier's staff met with the complainant. Subject to the protocols, it was referred to the Deputy Attorney General, criminal law. The Deputy Attorney General of the criminal law division, Mr Segal, recommended that the OPP look into this matter.

At the same time that the Premier's office and the secretary of the cabinet were informed that the Deputy Attorney General had referred the matter to the OPP, Mr Segal recommended that responsibilities for decisions relating to a file involved in the complaint be transferred to another minister. On September 30, the Premier directed that responsibility for the file be transferred from the Minister of Municipal Affairs to the Minister of Environment, who was the first alternate listed in the order in council identifying alternates for ministers.

Mrs Pupatello: An awful lot of information that seems to be privileged, depending on who you are, is now out in the public eye. As early as July 20, it is now alleged that this same minister was giving very personal information about minister's directives and his potential for zoning changes around this same Oak Ridges moraine, and he said that to a member of the public.

To the Acting Premier: Is that the kind of behaviour we would expect of cabinet ministers, that they would speak in very hushed tones to certain members of the public about the future direction of policy for that ministry, as it's been alleged happened to a member of the public on July 20 by this same Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing?

Hon Mr Hodgson: As I mentioned, the police are investigating this matter. I've gone through the process on how this was conducted. I would just like to caution the member again about making any unsubstantiated or uninformed allegations. It is being investigated by the OPP. A serious allegation has been made, and it was handled in the proper manner according to government protocols.

I would like to mention that you keep talking about inquiries. Your party has asked for 57 inquiries on 16 different matters throughout the last four years alone. This matter is being handled according to the protocols that are outlined for the government to proceed under.

The Speaker: Final supplementary.

Mrs Pupatello: Just to summarize: We now know the details of the allegations involved—\$25,000 per developer to influence the ear of the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing over the Oak Ridges moraine. That is the allegation. We also know that four senior government officials were aware of this detail well before it became public.

Regardless of the time that action took place in the Premier's office, the minister did not resign until October 23. That is several weeks for the minister to have his hands on all the pertinent files in question that are now before the OPP.

My question to the Acting Premier: The allegations made and publicized today about July 20 are very confidential information regarding the potential freezing of Oak Ridges moraine. Is that part of the OPP investigation? Will you be making the OPP investigation a public matter when it is complete? Do you not agree that a public inquiry, so we know the Premier's behaviour was in the best interest of the public during that interim time, is what we should be calling for and what you should support?

Hon Mr Hodgson: As I mentioned earlier, I'm not personally aware of the specific details of this matter, and I'd just like to remind her that nor is the member opposite. The police are investigating the matter. I caution members against jumping to unsubstantiated or uninformed allegations based on spurious reports.

I have outlined that when the Premier's office was made aware of this, they immediately referred the matter, according to government protocols, to the Deputy Attorney General, criminal law. When it was referred to the OPP, Murray Segal recommended that the file be transferred and it was done. We are in full compliance with the stages laid out to handle these types of serious allegations.

The Speaker: New question, leader of the third party.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I wanted to ask this question of the Premier, because after all it is his government and he is the one ultimately responsible. But since he is not here, I'll go to the Acting Premier.

The Acting Premier will know that it is now the day after Hallowe'en, and there's a certain ghost hanging around your government. I might refer to it as the ghost of someone called Patti Starr. I mention that name because you'll remember that that too was a development scandal, a development scandal that went to the heart of the government, only now we've got some different actors in this particular scheme.

The allegation that was made this weekend is that—
Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. The member needs to be able to ask the question.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order, government side.

Mr Hampton: The allegation that was made over the weekend is that Mr Gilchrist's personal lawyer was charging \$25,000 per case in order to influence govern-

ment decision-making. That is a very specific allegation. I want to know, when did the Premier's office find out about that specific allegation, the allegation of \$25,000 for changing opinion?

Hon Mr Hodgson: As I mentioned earlier, I'm not personally aware of the specific details of this matter, nor is the member opposite. The police are investigating the matter, so I caution the members opposite, but I can inform you of the following:

On September 27 the Premier's office received a voice mail that was vague in its nature.

On September 28 they tried to reach the complainant, and they finally did by cellphone. He was unable to have a meeting that day.

On September 29 they had the meeting and immediately following the meeting with the complainant, the Premier's office referred the matter to the Deputy Attorney General and the assistant Deputy Attorney General, criminal law division. The referral was consistent with existing government protocols covering complaints of this nature. So it was immediately after that meeting.

Mr Hampton: I asked you a very specific question. The allegation is that Mr Proszanski, who is Mr Gilchrist's personal lawyer, was saying to developers out there, "If you provide me with \$25,000, I can influence government policy." This matter was serious enough for the assistant Deputy Attorney General for criminal law to refer it to the OPP for a criminal investigation on or about September 29. While the OPP are conducting a criminal investigation, does that mean that the Premier's office suddenly shut down, that the Premier's office doesn't take any responsibility after that for what happens?

The OPP investigation is one thing. That is meant to protect the people of Ontario from criminal conduct. Who's protecting the public of Ontario from the misuse of taxpayers' money, from the misuse of developers' money and from conflicting private interest versus public interest? Why wasn't the Premier's office doing its job while the OPP were out there doing their job?

Hon Mr Hodgson: As I've pointed out in this House today three or four times, the allegation is just that, an allegation. The matter was handled properly according to government protocol, and it was recommended by the assistant Deputy Attorney General to refer it to the OPP. That was done.

As I mentioned, September 27 was the first voice mail. It was vague; it didn't name any individuals. They tried to get a meeting. That was arranged for September 29. Immediately after that meeting it was referred through the proper protocols and the OPP were called in. I don't know how much more specific I can get.

Mr Hampton: I'm not asking about when the allegation was brought against Mr Gilchrist. I accept that was probably some time around September 27. What I'm asking you about is the allegation that Mr Proszanski was charging developers and others \$25,000 a case for the purpose of influencing government decision-making. If the OPP and the assistant deputy minister for criminal

law were satisfied that this was a serious matter, so serious that it ought to undergo an OPP criminal investigation, you ought to know, and you ought to be able to tell us, when the Premier's office became aware of the \$25,000-a-case allegation. I ask you that specific question again. If the OPP are investigating this, the alarm bells should have gone off everywhere in the Premier's office. When did you become aware of the allegation of \$25,000 to influence government decision-making?

Hon Mr Hodgson: As I've mentioned earlier, I'm not personally aware of the specific details of the matter, nor is the member opposite. The police are investigating the matter, so I would caution the member opposite again to restrain from unsubstantiated and uninformed allegations. I've pointed out that the Premier's office did handle this matter very seriously and followed the proper protocol.

1440

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The minister has referred repeatedly to the government's protocol. Pursuant to standing order 39(a), could that protocol be tabled with the House so that all parties could see that protocol?

The Speaker: You know that the rule is that if you quote at length from the protocol, then it should be tabled. It is my opinion that the minister has not quoted at length from it. He has referred to it, but he has not quoted from it at length. I would however, though, caution the minister that he should be aware of what the rules are. They are very clear that as long as you quote from it, it should be tabled. In this particular case, he has referred to it but he has not quoted from it.

Mr Duncan: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The question has now been asked six times, and there have been six references to that protocol. It would seem to me that that protocol is germane to the discussion that's going on. I would ask, sir, that you request that the government table that protocol so that all members of the House can be familiar with it.

The Speaker: You heard specifically what I said on the ruling on that. It is when you quote from it. He has not been quoting from it; he has referred to it. I've made my ruling.

Leader of the third party.

Mr Hampton: I want to try again with the Acting Premier. I find it surprising that the Acting Premier comes into the Legislature today and would have us believe that while an OPP criminal investigation is going on with respect to the former Minister of Municipal Affairs, the Premier's office suddenly wants to pretend that it knows nothing, hears nothing and sees nothing.

Look, while the OPP are out there conducting a criminal investigation, I would think the Premier's office would want to be acquiring all the information it could to ensure that public decisions are being made properly, to ensure that private decisions are not overriding public interest, to ensure that, once again, the public interest is being protected.

I'm asking you a very specific question: If the OPP are investigating this, if the assistant deputy minister for

criminal law regards it as a serious matter, when did the Premier's office learn about the \$25,000-fix allegation? When?

Hon Mr Hodgson: I've mentioned this before. The Premier's office, when made aware of this allegation, referred it specifically to the assistant Deputy Attorney General of criminal law. Mr Segal is responsible for making the recommendations about steps that should be taken to protect the integrity of an investigation. Had Mr Segal felt such a step necessary, the government would have immediately complied.

Mr Hampton: Minister, here's the situation: We've got allegations of influence peddling around Steve Gilchrist. We've had environmentalists say that before the minister resigned, he may have been ordered by the Premier's office to change his position on protecting lands around the Rouge River. We've got Mr Clement, who's supposed to be the Minister of Environment, writing letters on behalf of developers, telling municipal councils to change their position. We've got all of those things happening, and yet your answers here today are, "We don't know anything."

Well, since you don't know anything, let me ask you two questions. While you're learning what you should know already, will you impose a freeze on development on the Oak Ridges moraine? Second, will you commit to a royal commission to inquire into this so that you can learn what you should already know and the rest of the people of Ontario can learn what's going on here? Will you make those two commitments?

Hon Mr Hodgson: Your question assumes a lot. I don't think anyone in this House knows all the specific details. That's why the proper process was followed. That's why the police are investigating it. It would premature for us to be judge and jury and investigation arm. That's not the way it should work. I think you'd be the first one up talking about the rights of the accused, with your legal background. You're calling for a royal commission; you're calling for a public inquiry. We've done the proper thing by referring it to the assistant Deputy Attorney General, criminal law. They've recommended that the process be looked at by the OPP.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): My question is for the Minister of Health. This morning, CBC Radio told the story of an Ottawa man, 42-year-old Jim Kirk, who broke his leg cycling and was refused admission to the nearest emergency room because it was not accepting emergencies that day. He ended up waiting three days for surgery, finally having it at 3:30 in the morning because the surgeon felt badly about the wait. He later developed a blood clot and died. His widow believes the wait for surgery was responsible for his death. The hospital says that operating room hours, like the hours in emergency rooms, were reduced because of cuts.

Minister, your only response to the Ottawa Hospital has been to tell them to cut more. How many more people like Jim Kirk may die because you're forcing the Ottawa Hospital to make even more cuts?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): As the member knows, our government actually has given additional money to emergency rooms and emergency services throughout the province of Ontario. In fact, we have increased funding for all hospitals in this province in this past year. We have been identifying the priority needs, and certainly emergency services and cardiac services and dialysis and hip and knee have all seen increases in spending.

Mrs McLeod: I have in my hand the letter that your ministry sent last month to the Ottawa Hospital telling them that their operating plan for this year was not approved. The letter tells them to bring in a new operating plan that gets rid of their deficit. The hospital has already had to cut back on the hours of its emergency rooms, it has had to cut back on the hours its operating rooms are open, and your response in this letter is to tell them to cut more.

This is exactly the same letter that 76 hospitals across this province received last month. Lake of the Woods hospital in Kenora last week announced that they would cut 10 more beds and cancel all elective surgery for six weeks because they are running a deficit. Your response to Kenora? Cut more. A woman in Windsor waited nine weeks for breast cancer surgery; you want the Windsor hospitals to cut millions more to get rid of their deficits. Sudbury Regional Hospital is to cut services to balance their budget. And the list goes on.

Minister, your stated plan is to take another \$100 million out of hospital budgets this year. Again I ask you, how many more patients' lives will be put at risk because your government won't stop the cuts to hospitals?

Hon Mrs Witmer: First of all, I think it's important to set the record straight, and that is that there are no cuts to hospitals. In fact, last year the base funding for hospitals in this province was \$6.83 billion, and this year hospitals will be receiving at least \$7.2 billion in base funding. You may be interested in knowing that at the present time, if we take a look at the health budget in the province of Ontario, which as you know has increased each and every year since we were elected in 1995 and is now at \$20.6 billion and will be increasing another 20%—we all know that hospitals today use 40% of that funding—we have increased and added \$130 million additional for nursing, \$9.1 million for neonatal care—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Minister, take your seat. Time. New question.

INTERNET ACCESS

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): My question is to the Minister of Energy, Science and Technology. In the riding of Perth-Middlesex computer technology has improved and enhanced the lives in our communities. Many people in my area are now doing their banking,

accessing their personal information and shopping on the Internet. Businesses are marketing and expanding outside of Perth-Middlesex through the use of the Internet. People are seeing opportunities through computers that have never before been available.

I've met with many local businesses and individuals and they have expressed to me the frustration they experience with the quality of Internet access in the rural communities. With so much work in my area becoming more reliant on technology, access to the Internet is a major concern.

Interjections.

Mr Johnson: Even some of those across the way may be interested in this question if they'd just listen.

Minister, what is the government doing to ensure that rural communities like Perth-Middlesex are able to compete with urban centres in the technological area?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Energy, Science and Technology): I thank the honourable for the question and beg the indulgence of all members. This is a very important matter if you live in rural or small-town Ontario.

For years now in small-town Ontario our telephone exchange—yes, we've gone to Touch-Tone dialling, but the backbone of the system never changed. It wasn't economically feasible in an era of competition for Bell Canada to actually upgrade the phone system to be comparable to that of Toronto or Barrie or other urban centres.

Last week I, along with my colleagues Bob Runciman and Ernie Hardeman, was able to announce for the first time in the history of Ontario the upgrade to rural Ontario and small town data network services or your telephone services. If you live in rural Ontario today, as I do, and you're hooked up to the Internet, you know how slow it is for a page to simply load. Now people and businesses in rural Ontario, health care in rural Ontario, community services in rural Ontario, government services in rural Ontario, will have the same access speed and the same telephone quality service on the lines that our urban cousins have enjoyed for years, and it's a long overdue announcement.

Mr Johnson: Thank you, Minister. The people of Perth-Middlesex will be very pleased.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. Members, please allow him to put the question.

Mr Johnson: Could you explain which areas of the province will be involved in this new initiative, and how will this work and who are the partners involved?

Hon Mr Wilson: Thank you again. By the way, our major partner, Bell Canada, has put in \$8.3 million and the government of Ontario is putting in \$3.5 million, a well over \$11-million project.

The 270 communities are in the exchanges of 519, 905, 613 and the southern portion of the 705 exchange.

Our other partners on this project, which will be conducting a number of seminars for businesses and people in rural Ontario over the next few months, are our non-profit partners. I want to thank the Ontario Rural Council

and the Regional Networks for Ontario that are each contributing resources, and as I said, will be conducting seminars.

Again, through this announcement, in a massive way, for the first time in the province, rural Ontario is being brought on-line the same as urban Ontario. Business development communities in our ridings in our small towns have asked for this for years, our mayors and reeves have asked for it, and this government is delivering modern services to rural Ontario.

LITHOTRIPSY

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): My question is to the Minister of Health and it concerns health service in eastern Ontario.

The minister will know that lithotripsy is wonderful medical technology which allows for the non-surgical treatment of kidney stones, surely one of the most excruciatingly painful medical conditions known to humankind.

In Ontario today there are two locations, and two locations only, for that treatment: Toronto and London. There is a third lithotripter now at the Riverside campus of the Ottawa Hospital in the national capital. Regrettably, that machine is not in use.

I want to ask, on behalf of the hundreds of patients who desperately need the service that machine can provide, can you explain why your ministry has not chosen to fund that lithotripter in Ottawa to serve the hundreds of patients who need it in my part of eastern Ontario?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I think it's important to put it in the context, and that is the fact that this machine was purchased without ministry approval having been given. I think that is very important. There was no endorsement of the purchase and there was also no endorsement of operating funds to operate the machine. We have indicated that certainly in the future we would support the development of a program at the new Ottawa Hospital, and we are continuing our discussion.

As I say, we approve this in principle, but I think it's important to be mindful of the fact that since 1996 there has not been an increase in the number of patients in this province using lithotripsy; it has remained about the same.

Mr Conway: I ask the minister and the House to keep in mind what we're talking about. We're talking about people who are stricken with kidney stone attacks. I'm sure all members know how incredibly painful that is. For people in Ottawa and Pembroke and Perth and Prescott, they're being told to go down the road to Montreal, Toronto or London, through a mass of traffic headaches, among other inconveniences.

The context is this: Just over a year ago, Minister, you wrote constituents in my part of eastern Ontario, and let me quote from your letter of December 1997: "The ministry has recently reviewed a proposal for lithotripsy services in Ottawa. We have advised both the Ottawa

General and the Ottawa Civic that we would support the development of a lithotripsy program as one of the services offered by the new amalgamated Ottawa hospital." That's the context.

What has changed, and why will you not relieve the pressure and the pain that these hundreds of patients are currently faced with because they can't use a machine that's been bought and paid for in Ottawa but rather have to go down the road to Montreal or hundreds of miles away to Toronto or London?

Hon Mrs Witmer: The member is quoting from the same letter that I have. As I indicated to you in my first response, we do support in principle the development of this program at the new hospital. I think we have to keep in mind that at the present time all urgent cases are treated within 48 hours—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. I cannot hear the reply from the minister.

Minister of Health.

Hon Mrs Witmer: We are continuing to monitor the need for these services throughout the province. Again, I would remind you that this machine was purchased without approval and there were no operating funds requested either.

1500

WASTE REDUCTION WEEK

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): My question is to the Minister of Education. Today the Minister of Education, along with the Minister of the Environment, declared this week to be Waste Reduction Week in Ontario.

It is truly encouraging to see this government supporting programs that educate our young people about the importance of waste reduction and recycling, practices that will ensure a clean and healthy future for Ontario.

I would like to ask the Minister of Education what the students in Ontario schools will be doing to support recycling efforts and the reduction of waste in the province.

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education): I'd like to start by welcoming the badger back to Queen's Park. I'd also like to thank the member for York North for her question.

Waste Reduction Week has been a very successful initiative in Ontario. Schools and teachers have been great participants in this over the many years it has been in existence.

This year we announced a new initiative called the Ontario ecoschools waste reduction recognition program, which is quite a mouthful. What it does is help schools set and achieve goals in waste reduction, and there's a contest that schools can enter to do this. This will complement the new emphasis on the environment in the curriculum at elementary and secondary schools.

I thank the Recycling Council and all their sponsors, specifically the Canada Trust Friends of the Environment Foundation, for their support.

Mrs Munro: I'm encouraged to see this government working with youth in Ontario schools to support environmentally friendly initiatives.

I am aware that Park Avenue public school, Holland Landing, attended the event at the Ontario Science Centre today. At this school, student volunteers make sure that students and staff recycle properly, and award certificates to good recyclers.

My question again is to the Minister of Education. What other programs are schools across Ontario putting in place to support the environment?

Hon Mrs Ecker: The honourable member mentioned the Park Avenue public school project. Today, Mr Clement and I heard presentations from the A.K. Wigg school in Fonthill, which had wonderful pictures of how they had taken a basically dead space around their school and turned it into a green space that actually has butterflies, a butterfly garden and composting. It is something they are using as a learning environment as well.

Hon Mrs Ecker: The Chisholm public school in Oakville has cleanups of local trails, streams and woodlots. I know the opposition across the way doesn't like good news here, but this is very much a good-news story. The Chisholm public school also planted 1,000 trees in Algonquin Park, which I think is a very significant accomplishment.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Would the member for Windsor-St Clair come to order, please.

Minister of Education.

Hon Mrs Ecker: The Cartwright Central public school in Blackstock also has a wonderful program.

We expect that many more schools will be entering this. With the special supports that many of them have for special-ed children, I know that many of them in my own riding have the opportunity to participate in this as well.

SERVICES FOR ABUSED WOMEN

Ms Frances Larkin (Beaches-East York): My question is to the minister responsible for women's issues. As we mark the beginning of Wife Assault Prevention Month, we know how critical it is that women and children who are fleeing violence are able to find the supports they need and a place they can go where they and their children can begin to forge a new life.

Second-stage housing has made a critical difference in those women's lives in the past. It's not only a place to live, but it's the programs and supports to help them build the self-esteem and self-reliance they need to move on.

When your government came to power in 1995, you cut \$2.6 billion from the funding of programs for second-stage housing. You did it without warning, you did it without consultation and you have left those programs

unable to provide the counselling support that women and children so desperately need.

As a result of your cuts, five second-stage housing programs have now closed in the province.

Minister, this is a critical step in transition for women and children to new lives. I ask you today: Will you restore the funding to these programs?

Hon Helen Johns (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, minister responsible for seniors and women): I'd like to just talk for a few minutes about how important it is that we do things to ensure that women are safe in their homes and their communities. What the member opposite is asking me is how money should be spent within the mandate we have, which is \$100 million being spent on violence initiatives. I know there's a divergent opinion about how that should be, but let me reinforce that we have funded heavily community-based counselling services for those in need. Right now the government funds 27 sexual assault treatment centres and 33 rape crisis centres. It additionally funds 120 community-based programs which give counselling to women in need, especially in terms of domestic violence.

Ms Lankin: Minister, no, I'm not talking about how you cut up your \$100-million pie and how you have women's organizations fight against each other to get those resources. If you can find \$16 million for hockey, you can find \$3 million for abused women and children. That's what we're asking. Agencies that support those programs in second-stage housing for abused women and children, and other agencies, have had their program funding cut. It has not been restored. How many more women are going to end up in the streets or in hostels? How many are going to return to their abusers because they have nowhere else to go?

Minister, year after year the Ontario Second Stage Housing Alliance has asked to meet with the minister responsible for women's issues, and year after year they've been turned down. You have a chance to be a leader, to make a difference in the lives of so many women and children if you would listen to their pleas, if you would listen to their need and if you would step up to the plate to meet that.

It's Wife Assault Prevention Month. Will you commit today to meeting with the Ontario Second Stage Housing Alliance this month?

Hon Mrs Johns: I think we've heard here that the government's not doing enough with respect to counselling services, not doing enough with Wife Assault Prevention Month. Let me just say that I have an article in front of me as the result of an interview I did in the London Free Press yesterday, and it's from someone who's not a supporter of the Conservatives, a well-known person, Megan Walker. She says,

"In the 12 years I've been involved in women's abuse issues and violence against women, I really haven't seen the (public awareness) commitment I've seen over the last two years from all sorts of different providers."

As a result of Wife Assault Prevention Month, what we've done is set out to make people cognizant of the

fact that it's against the law to be involved in wife assault. We're all going to work very hard with that. We're going to ensure that women's programs are the best they've ever been in the province.

OAK RIDGES MORaine

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a question for the Minister of the Environment. Minister, the odour of scandal is hanging over the Oak Ridges moraine today with the resignation of your colleague municipal affairs minister Steve Gilchrist on allegations of influence-peddling and your own meddling on behalf of a developer in a decision related to the potential development of this environmentally sensitive area. There's simply a prevailing view in the public that the Harris government can't wait to pave over the moraine at the behest of your development supporters.

In view of the scandal surrounding your government on issues related to the development of the Oak Ridges moraine, will you now impose an immediate freeze on any further development and on activities that will aid and abet development of this natural treasure?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of the Environment, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I thank the honourable member for the question. Three responses to that. First of all, just to correct the record, I at no time solicited anything on behalf of any developer. Let's set the record straight on that.

Secondly, I can say with certainty that it is not the policy of this government to pave over the moraine. Indeed, we are looking for ways that are best suited to protect the ecological nature of the moraine and make sure it is not sacrificed at the expense of development or any other activity that goes on there.

In the third place, the honourable member has made a suggestion, and I take that suggestion under advisement and I thank him for his input.

Mr Bradley: Minister, while you've been writing this letter on behalf of a developer involved in the Oak Ridges moraine, and you have indeed, five leading conservation groups justifiably concerned about development in this area that contains the headwaters of 30 rivers and hundreds of important natural areas and dozens of rare species of plants and animals has produced an action plan to save the moraine. They have called for tough new land-use planning controls, an immediate freeze on public spending on projects and planning processes that may damage the moraine environment, a dedication of 5% of the province's recently announced \$20-billion SuperBuild Growth Fund to acquire land for new public park creation in southern Ontario and the imposition of development surcharges on moraine lands for parkland acquisition in the moraine.

Is it your intention to continue to go to bat for your developer supporters, or will you be implementing the thoughtful action plan proposed by this reputable conservation coalition?

1510

Hon Mr Clement: I am not beating my wife, I can assure the honourable member of that. That is the type of question he's asking.

I can tell the honourable member that in fact—

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-East York): What a horrible thing to say at the beginning of Wife Assault Prevention Month. That's not funny.

Hon Mr Clement: That's right. I know it's not funny. It's quite serious, you're right.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Broadview-Greenwood): That was terrible.

Hon Mr Clement: To the honourable member, it is quite a serious thing, you're absolutely right. Before this becomes an issue, to the extent that I offended anyone by that comment, I do apologize, but the honourable member was asking the question in a way that elicited that response. I withdraw that comment.

To the question, the honourable member should know that I have already met with two environmental groups, including Earthroots and the Sierra legal defence fund, and the moraine came up. I wanted to be full and clear to him on that. I also wanted to say to this House that I'll be attending the 1999 Clean Waters Summit on the Oak Ridges moraine on Saturday, November 20, and I'm sure the moraine will be coming up there. So, this is an issue that is in the public eye. I can tell the honourable member that the Ontario Federation of Naturalists, which had a meeting at Queen's Park earlier today, had some new ideas.

AGRICULTURAL FUNDING

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey): I have a question for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs with respect to the question of the fair share federal dollars to Ontario farmers.

Last week the premiers of Saskatchewan and Manitoba went to Ottawa to ask Prime Minister Chrétien for \$1.3 billion for emergency aid to assist western farmers. The answer was that the cupboard was bare, that there was no money. Today, the federal government has announced that it has set aside \$190 million in new disaster assistance this year to help prairie farmers survive the current agricultural crisis and is considering spending \$1 billion more in new aid over the next years.

My question is, what is Ontario's position with this latest federal position?

Hon Ernie Hardeman (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): I'd like to thank my colleague from Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey for the question. As the member so aptly put it, it is a possibility that the issue is based on media reports. In fact, if the federal government is coming up with \$190 million to help the depressed condition of commodities in our agricultural community, we wholeheartedly support that.

But I do want to point out that our position in the Blueprint was that we would get our fair share from Ottawa. Again, that was put to us by all the farmers in

Ontario, that they wanted us to get our fair share from Ottawa. I want to assure my colleague that we will be pushing for a fair distribution of the money that Ottawa is talking about.

We wholeheartedly agree that the country could help Manitoba and Saskatchewan, but I want to point out that the provinces in Canada have all agreed on changing the way safety nets are funded and—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Supplementary.

Mr Tilson: Last week the National Post made a statement that the World Bank is calling for the world to undertake a new green revolution, claiming that by the year 2025 there will be four billion people living on less than US\$2 a day and two billion people in extreme poverty. So desperate will the world be for food by that date, that according to the World Bank the earth's production will need to increase by 50%. My question is, Minister, can you explain how the federal government is able to find all of a sudden this extra money, and how will our farmers find that cash in the near future?

Hon Mr Hardeman: Thank you again for the follow-up question. I want to assure the member that it's very important that the federal government, along with all the provincial governments, fund agriculture in an equitable way so that it's sustainable until such time as the prices of our commodities go up.

Referring back to the issue that the member brought up, it's important to note that on October 28 Mr Vanclief—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Member for Windsor-St Clair, come to order, please.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): My apologies.

Hon Mr Hardeman: —was asking for \$1 billion and I told him very clearly there is no \$1 billion. Now it seems in the announcement there may be. Again, we don't object to that; we just think it should be fairly distributed. The Prime Minister himself said, "It's not very realistic to add much more money," and he even said the financial picture—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Would the minister take his seat. I warned the member for Windsor-St Clair. I want to be very clear; this will be the last warning for the member for Windsor-St Clair.

Hon Mr Hardeman: I just want to finish off by saying that the Prime Minister said, "It's not my money; it is the taxpayers' money." I couldn't agree with him more. It is the taxpayers' money, and it should be fairly distributed to the taxpayers of Canada, not just in the west.

RENT REGULATION

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): I have a question for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. What information can you give this House on the closing

of hearing locations for the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal?

I have a letter dated August of this year from the chair which states, "We're looking into the redistribution of the tribunal's workload on a provincial basis." In York region alone, this has meant that all hearings previously held in Richmond Hill will now be at Yonge and Sheppard in North York. You'll also know that this follows the closure of the tribunal's only document filing office in Newmarket, forcing people to go to Toronto or Mississauga to file important documents in person. If you live in, say, Pefferlaw, and you don't have a car, then reasonable access to justice does not exist.

Minister, come clean with this House. Tell us how many hearing locations you've closed. How many filing centres have you closed? What do you say to tenants without cars who have to attempt to get to these hearings to stay in their homes, oftentimes an hour or two hours away?

Interjection.

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of the Environment, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I'm going to refrain from commenting on that.

I thank the honourable member for the question. In fact, we are trying to find ways to balance off doing better with less with different means of access in our system. There are some ways of access that, through technology, are now available that were not available before. You can file things electronically now that you hitherto were not able to do. There are ways to communicate that information that is not in person, necessarily. If the honourable member has a suggestion on how to do things better for less, I welcome him. Certainly, we would take it under advisement.

Mr Caplan: That's an incredibly arrogant answer, Minister. You talk about backlog inefficiencies. You haven't answered the question about why tenants are having to make these unacceptable trips. Your government—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. Stop the clock. Member for Don Valley East. Start the clock.

Mr Caplan: Apparently I've touched a nerve over there. The Harris government has removed almost all tenant protections in this province, so the minimal opportunities that do exist to access justice have been diminished by your closure of hearing locations and of filing sites.

Take a look at eastern Ontario for a minute. The tribunal used to hear cases in Napanee. They don't any more; they hear them in Belleville, over one hour away. The tribunal used to hear cases in Bancroft. They don't any more; they hear them in Belleville, two hours away.

Come clean with us, Minister. How does this process work for greater efficiency? It's actually less for less for tenants. If you don't have a car or access to transit, how are you supposed to defend yourself at a hearing? Why aren't you doing anything about this? Will you stop the assault on tenants and demand that the closures cease

immediately? Will you ask the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal to reconsider the closures that they've already made?

1520

Hon Mr Clement: I thank the honourable member for his suggestions. I understand that the ORHT is in fact doing an operational review of some of its activities. They are trying to do more with less on behalf of the citizenry of Ontario. I would certainly undertake on his behalf, or he can do so himself, to bring that to the attention of the tribunal.

I can also say to this House, as I said before, that lots of departments of government, or tribunals, are working with new technologies that are available now. In fact, this tribunal is looking at teleconferencing, which is a way for citizens to gain access to government services without having to drive even beyond their city limits, which was not available to them before. I encourage the honourable member, if he thinks this is a good idea, to come on board and help us do better with less as well.

HAZARDOUS WASTE

Mr Brad Clark (Stoney Creek): My question is also for the Minister of the Environment. Before I became a member of this House, I worked closely with the member for Wentworth-Burlington looking into the importing of US EPA-designated untreated hazardous waste for dumping at the Taro landfill in Stoney Creek. The results of our work, as well as that of concerned citizens in my community, prompted your ministry to launch a full investigation into this matter. Last month, your ministry's investigations and enforcement branch released a report on their findings and immediately you moved to close the loophole that allowed the waste to be dumped in a landfill. What steps are you taking to ensure that a similar situation will not happen again in Stoney Creek or anywhere else in Ontario?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of the Environment, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I thank the honourable member for his question and welcome him to the House. I can tell the honourable member that when the report was released, this government moved quickly to strengthen Ontario's hazardous waste regulations and requirements for hazardous waste facilities across this province.

I want to share with the honourable members the six-point plan that we announced at that moment: First, we would give immediate legal force to the generator registration manual, which was not in force as a policy of this government; second, we are going to revise the hazardous waste regulations, effective immediately, to ensure that even if hazardous waste is mixed with other substances, it is considered the same type of hazardous waste—it comes under the same rules; third, we're looking at revising the current hazardous waste manifesting in regulation to be the toughest in Ontario history; fourth, amending certificates of approval across the province; fifth, revising the specific certificate of approval on the

Hamilton site; and sixth, we're immediately establishing an independent expert panel to examine the potential for any long-term effects at Taro to ensure that the citizens in that particular community are safe.

Mr Clark: Last week, I attended a meeting of the Taro community liaison committee to discuss the terms of reference for the ministry's expert panel, which you just mentioned. Some pundits and opposition members have been questioning the level of our commitment to fulfilling the six-point plan. Moreover, the company has encouraged the local ministry office to merge the ministry's expert panel with a panel established by the company itself. Local residents have voiced their opposition to this merger. Minister, will you state your commitment to this plan by ensuring the ministry will not merge its expert panel with a panel created by the company?

Hon Mr Clement: Absolutely. That is not our plan. We are working with the community liaison committee. We are inviting those members—I think there's a member here today watching and I welcome him to this chamber. We want to work with them. We are committed to creating this expert panel. We want to make sure the terms of reference are satisfactory to the community, and they're in the process of being finalized. We want to get this plan up and running as soon as possible so that the citizens in that area have not only healthy circumstances but also peace of mind. I think that's very important for the people of Ontario.

PETITIONS

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Last week, we talked about petitions, and there were some points of order. I thought there had been a little bit more agreement on the petitions, so we will continue with the old way of doing things, and I thank all the members for their points of order last week. There were some valid points that were made.

HIGHWAY SAFETY

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas 13 people died during the first seven months of 1999 on Highway 401 between London and Windsor; and

"Whereas traffic levels on all sections of Highway 401 continue to increase; and

"Whereas Canada's number one trade and travel route was designed in the 1950s for fewer vehicles and lighter trucks; and

"Whereas road funding is almost completely paid through vehicle permit and driver licensing fees; and

"Whereas Ontario road users pay 28 cents per litre of tax on gasoline, adding up to over \$2.7 billion in provincial gas taxes and over \$2.3 billion in federal gas taxes;

"We, the undersigned members of the Canadian Automobile Association and other residents of Ontario,

respectfully request the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately upgrade Highway 401 to at least a six-lane highway with full paved shoulders and rumble strips; and

"We respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario place firm pressure on the federal government to invest its gasoline tax revenue in road safety improvements in Ontario."

Mr Speaker, I'm proud to affix my signature to this petition.

COURT DECISION

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): I have a number of petitions dealing with the Supreme Court decision in *M. v. H.*, which I would like to file with the clerk. I will not read them. They have been signed by, I would say, 400 to 500 people.

HIGHWAY SAFETY

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): I have petitions that have been sent to me by the Canadian Automobile Association, Ontario, signed by constituents in Essex, Belle River, Kingsville, Ruthven, Maidstone, Amherstburg and Cottam.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas 13 people died during the first seven months of 1999 on Highway 401 between London and Windsor; and

"Whereas traffic levels on all sections of Highway 401 continue to increase; and

"Whereas Canada's number one trade and travel route was designed in the 1950s for fewer vehicles and lighter trucks; and

"Whereas road funding is almost completely paid through vehicle permit and driver licensing fees; and

"Whereas Ontario road users pay 28 cents per litre of tax on gasoline, adding up to \$2.7 billion in provincial gas taxes and over \$2.3 billion in federal gas taxes;

"We, the undersigned members of the Canadian Automobile Association and other residents of Ontario, respectfully request the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately upgrade Highway 401 to at least a six-lane highway with full paved shoulders and rumble strips; and

"We respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario place firm pressure on the federal government to invest its gasoline tax revenue in road safety improvements in Ontario."

I have signed this petition.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I am pleased to present a petition to the Ontario Legislature on behalf of my constituents from the riding of Durham, and I might name a few of the lead petitioners: Ken Malley, K. Fice, H. Fice and Mary Fice, who all live in Bowmanville.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas 13 people died during the first seven months of 1999 on Highway 401 between London and Windsor; and

"Whereas traffic levels on all sections of Highway 401 continue to increase; and

"Whereas Canada's number one trade and travel route was designed in the late 1950s for fewer vehicles and lighter trucks; and

"Whereas road funding is almost completely paid through vehicle permit and driver licensing fees; and

"Whereas Ontario road users pay 28 cents per litre of tax on gasoline, adding up to over \$2.7 billion in provincial gas taxes and over \$2.3 billion in federal" Liberal "gas taxes;

"We, the undersigned members of the Canadian Automobile Association and other residents of Ontario, respectfully request the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately upgrade Highway 401 to at least a six-lane highway with full paved shoulders and rumble strips; and

"We respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario place firm pressure on the federal government to invest its gasoline tax revenue on road safety improvements in Ontario."

Mr Speaker, I'm pleased to support that pressure on the federal government.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): I have a similar petition that CAA has been distributing, signed by a number of people in the Kingston area. It's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas 13 people died during the first seven months of 1999 on Highway 401 between London and Windsor; and

"Whereas traffic levels on all sections of Highway 401 continue to increase; and

"Whereas Canada's number one trade and travel route was designed in the 1950s for fewer vehicles and lighter trucks; and

"Whereas road funding is almost completely paid through vehicle permit and driving licence fees; and

"Whereas Ontario road users pay 28 cents per litre of tax on gasoline, adding up to \$2.7 billion in provincial gas taxes and over \$2.3 billion in federal gas taxes;

"We, the undersigned members of the Canadian Automobile Association and other residents of Ontario, respectfully request the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately upgrade Highway 401 to at least a six-lane highway with full paved shoulders and rumble strips; and

"We respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario place firm pressure on the federal government to invest its gasoline tax revenue in road safety improvements in Ontario."

I'm pleased to hand this to our page.

1530

PARAMEDICS

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): A petition to the Honourable Lieutenant Governor and the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Health this past spring amended O. Reg. 501/97 under the Ambulance Act so that paramedics are considered no longer qualified to do their job if they accumulate a minimum of six demerit points on their driving record; and

"Whereas this amended regulation has resulted in at least one paramedic being fired from employment"—that's now at six, two from my home town of Hamilton—"and

"Whereas the Ministry of Health's regulation is far more punitive and harsh than the Ministry of Transportation's, which monitors and enforces traffic safety through the Highway Traffic Act; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Transportation mails out a notice to drivers at six to nine demerit points, and suspends a person's driver's licence at 15 points for a 30-day period; and

"Whereas none of the other emergency services in Ontario, eg fire and police services, are held to the same standard or punished so harshly; and

"Whereas this amended regulation is not needed since other sections of the Ambulance Act protect the public against unsafe driving and/or criminal behaviour by paramedics; (specifically O. Reg. 501/97, part III, section 6, subsections 8, 9 and 10); and

"Whereas the Ministry of Health's actions are blatantly unjust and punitive, and they discriminate against paramedics;

"Therefore we, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, beg leave to petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately eliminate any references to the accumulation of demerit points during employment from O. Reg. 501/97 under the Ambulance Act (specifically, part III, section 6, subsection 7), thereby allowing the Highway Traffic Act to apply to paramedics; and

"To order the immediate reinstatement of paramedics who have been fired under the regulation."

I continue to add my support to Ontario's paramedics.

HENLEY ROWING COURSE

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): This petition is to the government of Ontario.

"Whereas the Henley rowing course in St Catharines is an outstanding rowing facility which has for several decades been the site of hundreds of international rowing competitions; and

"Whereas the World Rowing Championship has been held in St Catharines in 1970 and 1999 and has been declared an outstanding success on both occasions; and

"Whereas the municipal, provincial and federal governments, along with generous private donors, invested several million dollars in the upgrading of the Henley rowing course to enable the 1999 World Rowing Championship to be held in St Catharines and that as a result the Henley is a first-class rowing facility; and

"Whereas the organizing committee of the World Rowing Championship, the annual Royal Canadian

Henley Regatta and other prestigious regattas, has the proven expertise to operate major international rowing competitions; and

"Whereas all taxpayers in Ontario will be compelled to contribute to any financial assistance provided by the Ontario government for the Olympic bid for the city of Toronto; and

"Whereas the creation of a new rowing facility outside of St Catharines for the Toronto Olympic bid would result in the unnecessary expenditure of millions of dollars to duplicate the St Catharines rowing facility; and

"Whereas the rowing facility for several recent Olympic Games has been located outside the sponsoring and host city;

"We, the undersigned, urge the government of Ontario to persuade the Toronto Olympic bid committee to propose the Henley rowing course in St Catharines as a site of the rowing competition for the 2008 Olympic Games."

I affix my signature to this petition.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): I'm sorry; you put your signature on it before?

Mr Bartolucci: I did.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

TAXATION

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I'm pleased to present a petition on behalf of a number of my constituents who are concerned about the rate of taxation in Ontario and indeed Canada.

"Whereas the personal income tax rate in Canada is one of the highest in the G7 nations; and

"Whereas the federal unemployment insurance fund currently has a surplus of some \$21.8 billion;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and the Minister of Finance, the Honourable Ernie Eves, to urge his federal counterpart, Paul Martin, to immediately reduce the rate of taxation; and

"Further, we do support Premier Harris's endeavours to eliminate the deficit and the debt."

HIGHWAY SAFETY

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the carnage continues on Highway 401 between London and Windsor; and

"Whereas traffic levels on all sections of Highway 401 continue to increase; and

"Whereas Canada's number one trade and travel route was designed in the 1950s for fewer vehicles and lighter trucks; and

"Whereas road funding is almost completely paid through vehicle permit and driving licence fees; and

"Whereas road users in Ontario pay 28 cents per litre of tax on gasoline, adding up to over \$2.7 billion in provincial gas taxes;

"We, the undersigned members of the Canadian Automobile Association and other residents of Ontario, respectfully request the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately upgrade Highway 401 to at least a six-lane highway; and

"We request that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario place firm pressure on the federal government to reinvest gas tax revenues for road safety improvements in the province of Ontario."

I respectfully submit this and affix my signature.

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas 13 people died during the first seven months of 1999 on Highway 401 between London and Windsor; and

"Whereas traffic levels on all sections of Highway 401 continue to increase; and

"Whereas Canada's number one trade and travel route was designed in the 1950s for fewer vehicles and lighter trucks; and

"Whereas road funding is almost completely paid through vehicle permit and driving licence fees; and

"Whereas Ontario road users pay 28 cents per litre of tax on gasoline, adding up to over \$2.7 billion in provincial gas taxes and over \$2.3 billion in federal gas taxes;

"We, the undersigned members of the Canadian Automobile Association and other residents of Ontario, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario immediately upgrade Highway 401 to at least a six-lane highway with fully paved shoulders and rumble strips; and

"We respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario place firm pressure on the federal government to invest its gasoline tax revenue in road safety improvements in Ontario."

This petition is signed by a number of residents from Tilbury, Chatham and Blenheim, and I affix my name to it.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 28, 1999, on the amendment to the amendment to the motion for an address in reply to the speech of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor at the opening of the session.

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): Mr Speaker, I rise today to speak to the throne speech. I would ask for unanimous consent to split my time with the member for Sarnia-Lambton.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Agreed? It is agreed.

Mr Peters: Before I talk about the future of our province, I should address the past. Hubris can fill newly elected members of the Legislature. The maiden speech is a good time to reflect on the road that brought us all to

Queen's Park and to remember that it takes the efforts of many people for each one of us to stand here today.

First and foremost, my most humble gratitude to the people of Elgin-Middlesex-London who entrusted me the guardianship of many of their hopes and dreams. I hope to be worthy of representing them in this Legislature and thank them for their faith in me.

I also want to pay tribute to the candidates who ran in the election in Elgin-Middlesex-London. By definition, the weight of democracy must be carried by many hands. I want to thank John Fisher, Dave La Pointe, Bruce Smith, Corey Janzen and Ray Monteith for taking up that weight and running so well.

On behalf of my constituents, I would like to applaud and thank two gentlemen who recently were members of this Legislature.

1540

Peter North represented Elgin ably from 1990 until this year, both as a member of the New Democratic Party and as the first independent representative in this House in more than six decades. Peter always worked hard for his constituents and remains a popular figure in the riding. I've also had the benefit of knowing Peter for over 20 years and can report that he is now very happy in his new position. Bruce Smith represented the riding of Middlesex from 1995 until 1999. A Progressive Conservative, Bruce was well liked by members of all parties. My best wishes to both Peter and Bruce.

I am proud and honoured to be the first representative of the new riding of Elgin-Middlesex-London, fashioned from the old riding of Elgin and a portion of the ridings of Middlesex and London South. This diverse constituency, a blend of both urban and rural, stretches from the banks of the Thames River in the north to the shores of Lake Erie in the south. Her boundaries encompass the White Oaks and Lambeth neighbourhoods of London and the rich farmland of Elgin and Middlesex. In this riding you will meet fine people from Aylmer, Port Stanley, North Dorchester, Delaware and Bayham, and the famous life-sized monument to Jumbo the elephant can be found among the many industry and manufacturing businesses of St Thomas. More than 80 kilometres of Highway 401 bisect Elgin-Middlesex-London, and parks dot the terrain and provide moments of quiet serenity.

It is an area rich in Liberal history, having sent forth Mitch Hepburn to battle the ravages of the Depression. Mitch was a strong believer in health care. He fought tooth and nail for the health needs of all Ontarians when he introduced the mandatory pasteurization of milk against staunch opposition. Mitch also helped to improve the living conditions of the mentally ill in hospitals across this province. It was Mitch's interest in mental health that produced the St Thomas Psychiatric Hospital, a hospital that is now slated to be closed by this government.

I invite the current Premier to visit the land of his predecessor, where hopefully he will learn something about fighting for health care rather than against it.

Before the voters granted me this opportunity at Queen's Park, I served for seven and a half years as mayor of St Thomas and three as alderman. Over more than a decade of municipal service, I learned a great deal. I want to take time to mention a couple of those lessons, lessons that I think are good for all of us.

First, there is only one taxpayer. If the province downloads services on to municipalities to pay for their tax cuts, the benefits of those tax cuts are going to be eradicated by a myriad of user fees and municipal taxes that cities and regions across this province will have to raise to pay for those services. Rather than confronting fiscal problems with courage and vision, this government has passed the problem on to municipalities, and that is wrong.

Second, politics is about people. During the election, the slogan of the Liberal Party was "putting people first," and that is a motto I firmly believe in and support. We should not serve in this House with an eye towards personal prosperity or blinded by ideological dogma. Rather, the role of the politician is to listen to the needs and desires of individuals, to draw people together, to facilitate the changes necessary to improve our society. It is my hope that this government will undertake more listening in the coming years.

Finally, legislators must consider both the past and the future. George Santayana wrote, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." Very few of the issues that we debate in this House are new, and we should look at what has worked in the past before pronouncing on what will work in the future.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my heartfelt thanks to the people of St Thomas for the confidence and trust you invested by thrice electing me as your mayor. I will use the same skills, qualities and dedication to serve the much broader constituency of Elgin-Middlesex-London. To the people of our riding I make the most important promise any elected representative can: I pledge to work hard in your interests.

As a legislator, I have a number of personal priorities that I will be discussing over the coming years.

One of the closest issues to my heart is the problems facing archives in this province. Archives are depositaries of our memories, a place where the past can be held until the future requires its wisdom. As this government restructuring process slashes the number of municipalities and downloads increasing financial strain, there is a real danger in this province that our archives will be damaged. I hope to bring this issue to your attention and to ensure that all Ontario's archives have the resources they require to continue their fine work.

More than 80 kilometres of Lake Erie shoreline form the southern boundary of my riding. The impressive cliffs that line the shore provide a home for exotic wildlife and protect nearby farmland. Unfortunately, that shoreline is seriously threatened by erosion. As a legislator, I hope to work to provide protection needed to preserve the shoreline and preserve this living treasure.

Another goal of mine is to see the re-establishment of passenger and freight ferry service between Port Stanley and Cleveland, Ohio. In a time of globalization and increased trade with the United States, the development of an alternative route to access the rich markets of the Ohio Valley will help to ensure the prosperity of the people of southwestern Ontario.

I also hope to be part of working towards assisting the province's transportation network. Our railways, local roads, 400-series highways, air and water networks are the ribbons that tie us together. Investing in transportation is one of the wisest things that we all can do to promote business and investment in Ontario.

The shortage of licensed physicians in my riding is a major problem that requires immediate attention. According to the Ministry of Health's own figures, released recently, in St Thomas there are only 20 doctors where the ministry says there should be 31. Aylmer has five doctors where there should be nine.

Improving access to health services is a key priority to me and my services to the constituents of Elgin-Middlesex-London. This government needs to address the problem of doctor shortages. Just last week, we had another doctor leave a family practice to move to a specialist position. That doctor has over 4,000 patients who are now desperately searching for someone to treat them.

I was deeply disappointed that the speech from the throne provided so little vision to combat the critical doctor shortage in underserviced parts of the province. In fact, the most promising development coming from the throne speech was the government's promise to copy the Liberal plan to offer free tuition to medical students promising to work in underserviced areas. Unfortunately, we still haven't seen any indication that they intend to make an immediate commitment to funding residency placements for foreign-trained family doctors.

As a former municipal politician, I understand the tensions that exist between three levels of government. As a legislator, I look forward to building a strong working relationship and partnerships with the federal government, but more importantly, with our municipal representatives. The municipal level is responsible for delivering most of the health care and education services, and I believe we must listen to our colleagues at that level.

I will work towards mental health reform. The St Thomas Psychiatric Hospital in my riding is closing, pushing dozens of people suffering from mental disorders out into the streets of our community. The province has a responsibility and a moral obligation to provide adequate services to ensure that people receive the assistance they require.

Finally, my leader, Dalton McGuinty, has provided me with an opportunity to criticize the government and their treatment of one and a half million persons with disabilities, and I want to thank him for that. The government record on this issue is embarrassing, and it would be easy to make a name for myself by exploiting the

victims of these misdeeds. However, my goal as a critic for people with disabilities is not to exploit but to improve. Persons with disabilities have waited far too long for justice in this province, and I am not about to derail all the gains that they have made for simple partisan advantage. Instead, I would ask my fellow members to remember the non-partisan spirit of October 29, 1998, when this House voted unanimously for a resolution calling for the government to pass an effective Ontarians with Disabilities Act.

In addition, I hope to work towards improving the Ontario disability support program that is mandated to provide security and quality of life to persons with disabilities.

I would like to conclude with a quotation from Mitch Hepburn, from the speech he gave to the Ontario Liberal Party on his selection as leader. The sentiment captures my feelings about the future, and I hope the feelings of my colleagues. "I will do my best and hope that, when my span of life is done, I will leave the world a little better place than I found it."

1550

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): It is with a great sense of honour that I stand in this House to deliver my maiden speech. I want to thank my family and friends and the mayor of Sarnia, his worship, who is here. They are here to support me. I thank them very much.

My predecessor, Mr David Boushy, who sat on the other side of this House, brought with him over 22 years of experience in the political arena. I, on the other hand, cannot say that I have much experience in the political realm, but what I lack in experience I will make up with a willingness to learn. I will give thoughtful analysis to the whirlwind of information that comes with this job. Most importantly, I will conduct myself with the clear purpose to be the best member of provincial Parliament that I can be for the riding of Sarnia-Lambton. I believe it appropriate at this time to thank all the people of Sarnia-Lambton who have given me this opportunity to serve them in this House, and through my actions I hope to earn their continued support over my term in office.

I would like to share with the honourable members a perspective of my riding. The city of Sarnia makes up 83% of the constituency and the other 17% is made of smaller urban and rural towns such as Point Edward and Corunna, Sombra, Mooretown, Courttright, Port Lambton, Wilkesport and Brigden. Sarnia-Lambton was also the home of Chris Hadfield, the astronaut. I live in the Sarnia suburb of Bright's Grove, the home of Mike Weir, the famous golf pro.

Sarnia-Lambton borders the US and is located at the tip of Lake Huron and the mouth of the St Clair River. We are today known as a major trade route between Ontario and the United States, and it appears that this has been the case for thousands of years. The area under the twinned Bluewater Bridge had been known through native oral tradition and qualified by the University of Western Ontario anthropology department as a gathering place where native tribes gathered and traded for over

2,000 years. Archaeologists uncovered a huge site of native artifacts at this location in 1995.

Sarnia is one of only two cities in Canada to have a native reserve within the city boundaries. The Chippewa Band in Sarnia is, in my opinion, a model for developing sound economic initiatives. It has an excellent rapport with the whole of Sarnia-Lambton, and its leadership is committed to taking responsibility for their healing and growth. Their vision for strong economic development, along with individual dignity, a healthy social environment, a rebuilding of a sense of culture and a stewardship of the natural world, is what I believe should be the vision of what this province aspires to as we turn the corner into the next millennium.

Sarnia-Lambton is the home and resting place of Alexander Mackenzie, elected to the first Canadian Parliament in 1867. He served as treasurer under Edward Blake's provincial government while also serving in the federal House. This stonemason contractor went on to become the second Canadian Prime Minister, as a Grit. Under Alexander Mackenzie, the Northwest Mounted Police was formed, and the Supreme Court of Canada and the secret ballot were founded. He faced the dilemma every leader faces sooner or later. The depression hit hard. Unemployment was up; the farmers were hungry; the treasury was low. Should he tell the people exactly how bad things were? He hesitated only for an instant. "The truth must be told," he said. His unwavering honesty was one of Alexander Mackenzie's significant contributions to Canadian politics.

Lord Dufferin, the Governor General of the day, changed his opinion of Mackenzie from a "poor creature" to describing Mackenzie as "pure as crystal and strong as steel." These are, for me, the most important attributes that I will attempt to emulate as a member of this House.

I will put on the record my perspective pertaining to my critic role in culture, recreation and heritage. Culture and heritage are vital to the health of a society, and throughout history all great governments have supported development of a healthy environment for culture and heritage. A strong and healthy cultural community has both tangible economic benefit as well as a deeper, intangible societal benefit that has shaped civilization.

The importance of culture is qualified by Tylor, an anthropologist who defined culture as "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs, and any capabilities and habits acquired by humans as members of society." Culture, within my critic role, includes visual art, theatre, music, literature, film, heritage and recreation. These disciplines and activities are what express, shape, define, and give identity to our society. I know and understand that culture shapes us as a people and that we shape culture. Government has a role to support and create a healthy environment for culture and heritage to thrive. Our heritage as exemplified in this magnificent building needs to have a long-term commitment to upkeep and stewardship. The whole topic of heritage properties needs to be addressed under an improved long-term plan for the province. Right now,

this government has put organizations such as museums and the Ontario Heritage Foundation and many cultural sectors in such dire economic straits that they are selling off assets that have been donated or bequeathed.

In Aurora, a property known as High Tor is being sold by the Ontario Heritage Foundation. This property, donated by Mrs Ann Smith in her will and accepted by the Ontario Heritage Foundation, is being sold for development.

Government has the moral, ethical and, I believe, legal responsibility that when a property has been donated or bequeathed and then in turn accepted as a heritage property, it be protected and maintained.

The throne speech indicates where the priorities are and where the priorities are not for this government. The actions of this government as outlined in the throne speech indicate that the priorities are not in the areas of culture, or seniors, or people with disabilities, the environment, adequate health care, safety on highways or good education.

As the new opposition member from Sarnia-Lambton, I will do my utmost to hold this government accountable. The good times in Ontario and the economic boom we hear about in the financial news no longer means or translates to a better quality of life for the general population. The reason I ran for political office is because I believe in open, accountable government. We are not here to propagate our own power, neither by stifling public debate nor by arrogantly centralizing power.

I agree that government must be run in a good, businesslike way. But government is not a business. Government provides the leadership that shapes the character of a society. A chill went up my spine when I heard the Premier say, "On this side of the House we provide real benefit to real people and keep the economy strong." Good government does not qualify that there are real people, because the unstated follows: that some people are not real. Have we not learned anything from governments in other parts of the world that have gone down this dangerous ideological path?

The type of society good government helps to shape is expressed in a quote I heard the other evening. It's a society that enables the weak to become strong, one that has the character so that the strong become just, and a society where the just become compassionate.

Applause.

The Deputy Speaker: Comments and questions?

Ms Marilyn Churley (Broadview-Greenwood): You don't have to clap; I'm not a new member. I do want to comment and say what a pleasure it is to listen to new members in the House. I'm sure we would all agree that most of us who have been here for a while are entirely predictable in what we're going to say, on all sides of the House. There aren't a lot of surprises. It was a pleasure to listen to the members for Sarnia-Lambton and Elgin-Middlesex-London, telling us a bit about their ridings and who they are so that we have an opportunity to know what issues they care about and what kind of role they're

going to play in this House. I appreciate very much hearing from them today.

Both members talked about issues that are very important to all of us in this House. The issue of disabilities, for instance, is a critic area of mine, among with many others. It is one I care very much about, as I'm sure we all do in this House. We know in a civilized society, and we all agree on this, that we take care of those less fortunate than us, that we want to treat people with disabilities as equal participants in our society and make sure that they can live with dignity and be able to participate fully.

1600

This government has fallen down in the last term of office. You have an opportunity now to pick up the pieces and bring forward very quickly an Ontario disabilities act, which has been promised; this has been mentioned time and time again. I just want to say that you will continue to hear from me and my party on this. We are committed to making sure, in working with you in a positive way, that this time it really happens.

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Energy, Science and Technology): To the honourable members who gave their maiden speeches, I congratulate you; I enjoyed them very much.

There was one issue that perked my attention as a former Minister of Health, and that was the comments by the member from Elgin-Middlesex-London about the need to have doctors better represented in rural and small-town Ontario. That's a problem in my own area, in the areas of Alliston and New Tecumseth and Clearview township, Markdale, Flesherton and Wasaga Beach. When I was Minister of Health and I tried to bite the bullet on this issue and actually do what other provinces are doing, I didn't get any support from the parties across the way, nor did I get any letters to the editor in support.

Most people in this province have no idea how our doctors are paid or that we're the only province left in Confederation where doctors get a billing number within two days of graduation and can go anywhere they want and set up practice. If you live in Nova Scotia today, you cannot get a billing number to practise in Halifax until you've practised a number of years outside of Halifax; the same with Newfoundland and St John's; the same with many other provinces and territories. I hope our government will have the courage to bite the bullet on this issue. It's called billing number management.

Already, the Ontario Medical Association is starting their tactics and their stories about foreign-trained doctors and their stories about not enough doctors, that somehow it's a supply problem and not a demand problem. I tell you, we have enough general practitioners and family practitioners; they're in the large urban areas. They need to be distributed. We need to say to them, "There are four jobs in Collingwood. There are four billing numbers there. Send your resumés. Apply for the job," just like every other profession in this world. No more exceptions; we need to bite the bullet.

We need the help of the opposition parties to do that, because the OMA is the most powerful lobby in this province. We need to do that on behalf of our residents in rural and small-town Ontario. I regret that during my time as Minister of Health I was unable to rally the support and beat back the bushes and actually do what's proper for the people of Ontario.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): This gives me an opportunity, in relation to what the former Minister of Health has said, to tell you that in my community of Kingston, which is a so-called over-serviced area, I'm advised by the academy of medicine there, and a number of doctors I've met, that they get 60 to 70 calls a day some days where people cannot get a family physician. So when he states there are enough physicians in the province, I don't know where he's talking about. Are they all here in Metro Toronto?

Hon Mr Wilson: Yes.

Mr Gerretsen: They're all here in Metro Toronto, he says. Then let's have an open and honest and non-partisan debate in this House about this issue at some stage, because that's what the people of Ontario want to know. Why can't people who have lived in communities for 10 or 15 years find a family physician? It's happening all over this province. Let's try to address that problem. Giving free tuition may solve part of the problem somewhere down the road, but it certainly doesn't do it for the next five to seven years.

Let me just say to the members for Elgin-Middlesex-London and Sarnia-Lambton how excellent their speeches were today. It made me think. I've heard some of the maiden speeches from some of the government members as well. When people first arrive in this House, they are full of anticipation and full of vim and vigour, and each one of them brings their own qualities, their own life's experiences to the job. Something seems to happen. Maybe it's the partisan nature of this House. I don't know what it is, but people should never, never let go of their idealism. I say to both of these members, speak out for the issues you're concerned about. Members on both sides of the House do listen, and hopefully collectively we can try to solve some of the problems that they've talked about and indeed that the former Minister of Health here today talked about, because that's certainly one issue we need to address immediately.

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs): I'll just speak very briefly to the introductory speeches by my colleagues. I'd simply congratulate them. They spoke very well. I can remember during my first speech in this House I was far more nervous. I don't think I spoke as well. They obviously bring the priorities of their constituents; they obviously bring the priorities that they personally believe in and want to push on behalf of the people of Ontario to this place. I congratulate each of them for their remarks and wish them all the best.

The Deputy Speaker: Either of the members has two minutes to respond.

Mr Peters: There are a number of issues that are facing us in this province. It's important that in many of these issues we do put the partisan nature of our politics aside. The area of doctors is one where I think we can find unanimous agreement all across this House.

I want to come back to another issue where I firmly believe we need to drop the partisan nature of what we're doing. That is the Ontarians with Disabilities Act. This is an issue that has been talked about in this House many times over. It goes back, at least with this government, to a promise from May 24, 1995, when the Premier promised in writing to the Ontarians with Disabilities Act Committee that the government would initiate a new piece of legislation within their first term of office. Well, that first term of office has come and gone. There was a unanimous resolution of this Legislature passed on October 29, 1998, that the government get on with an Ontarians with Disabilities Act.

I think we can take the partisan nature of what we are doing in this House and put it aside, because we need to be responsible for those 1.5 million persons with disabilities in this province, to sit down and start to remove the barriers that exist. We need to make sure that new barriers don't come about. There are too many barriers in place for people in this province today, and I think it's incumbent on every one of us in this House to work towards removing those barriers. We need to make sure that everybody, no matter where they live in this province, has an opportunity to live life to the fullest. One way, a major step, that we can all take as elected officials in this province is putting good legislation in place: an Ontarians with Disabilities Act.

The Deputy Speaker: I had two points I wanted to address the House on. The first one was in making greetings or waving to people in the galleries. Whereby your waving or acknowledging somebody in the galleries is not specifically out of order, it invites a response from them that is definitely out of order. I would suggest that we not approach that fine line. That is the first point.

The second one is that after debate we call for comments and questions. Those comments and questions are supposed to be about the speech that you have just been listening to. After having those comments and questions, there is a two-minute response to address the comments and questions that you have. I just wanted to bring that up particularly for the new members.

Further debate? The member for Willowdale.

Applause.

Mr David Young (Willowdale): Thank you, Mr Speaker, and I thank my colleagues as well for that warm welcome.

It is indeed a great honour and a privilege to rise in this House on behalf of the people of Willowdale and participate in today's debate on the speech from the throne.

Before I begin my remarks about the speech from the throne, I wish to express thanks to the hundreds of people who worked with me during the recent election and who assisted me by taking time away from their families, their

businesses and their leisure opportunities. These individuals were clearly compelled by a true desire to make this province a better place to live in. I encountered numerous individuals, as part of my campaign, who had never previously worked in any election or organized canvassing type of exercise. They did so this time around because they could see that Ontario was back on track. They did so because they were committed to making this province a better place to live in and to keeping this province on track. I'm truly honoured that they have placed their trust in me, and I am committed to working with everyone in my community, as well as my colleagues in this chamber on both sides of this House, to make Willowdale and Ontario a better place to live in, work in and to raise a family in.

1610

Willowdale is in fact an urban riding that is home to many hard-working Ontarians. These people contribute greatly to the success of this province. Families who can trace their background to every corner of the globe work together effectively with a spirit of co-operation each and every day.

Willowdale is also home to many distinguished individuals, including Mr Tom Wells, who served in this Legislature for many years as a very distinguished member and minister. As you will recall, he was the Minister of Education as well as the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, the latter during a period of time that was quite pivotal in the history of this country. Last year, Mr Wells deservedly received the Order of Ontario. I have the privilege of having close and frequent contact with Mr Wells. I had the privilege of having lunch with him last week, and with his guidance and friendship, I have greater confidence that I will be able to carry out the duties I have within this chamber.

The area of Willowdale also has a history of electing strong representatives to this House. Dr Bette Stephenson, who received the Order of Ontario last year and was also a minister in the government of Bill Davis, was one of those very strong and distinguished members. The people of Willowdale also had the good fortune of having Gordon Carton and Bruce McCaffrey represent them over the years.

I would certainly be remiss if I didn't also speak about my immediate predecessor, Charles Harnick. Mr Harnick served his constituents in the riding of Willowdale for nine years. Charlie's legacy is one of community involvement and respect for the significant responsibility that is entrusted to all elected officials. When one thinks of Charles, it's easy to remember the numerous professional successes in his political life. He was, of course, elected twice. He served as Attorney General as well as the minister responsible for native affairs. He initiated much-needed reforms to our court system, as well as introducing numerous pieces of legislation. However, when I look back and think about Charles, I will always remember his compassion. I'll remember the caring approach he brought to his numerous and onerous

responsibilities and his compassion for all those around him.

Charles is a trusted friend to both myself and to the people of Willowdale, and I want to thank him for his public service and commitment to the people of Willowdale and Ontario. I wish him the very best in all of his future endeavours.

As a new member of provincial Parliament, I have spent the summer months learning the job and meeting with constituents. I found the job to be both challenging and rewarding. Along with my responsibilities as an MPP, I have been appointed as the parliamentary assistant to the Honourable Janet Ecker. I'm pleased that the Minister of Education is in the chamber at this moment, because I wish to thank her for her inclusive, comprehensive and thoughtful approach to the challenging portfolio that she now manages and for the inclusive manner in which she has worked with me. I look forward to continuing to work with the minister over the next five years in supporting and encouraging excellence in Ontario's schools.

It's hard to believe that it was only five short months ago that everyone in this chamber was out on the campaign trail, and indeed this campaign was unlike any other. The campaign was hard-fought but also provided a good exchange of ideas and visions between all parties and all candidates. While the various factions did not always agree on issues, like the one before us today, we were all united by one common goal—and we've heard that throughout the last week in the throne speech debates—and that goal clearly is to make Ontario a better place to live, to work and to raise a family.

I decided to run for elected office because I believe I can make a difference. As we sit on the brink of a new millennium and all the promise and challenges this new era in history will present to us, we cannot sit still and passively watch history unfold. This government has proven that it will not sit back and just let history happen. Our Premier and our caucus believe it takes strong leadership to build a strong and prosperous Ontario. Strong leadership and a commitment to a brighter future for this province is what we find within the throne speech.

The spirit of change that defined our first term is alive and well. A great deal, though, remains to be done.

The people of Ontario want us to be leaders. They expect us to take on the 21st century with a confidence and a zeal that is unparalleled in Ontario's history. We need to commit ourselves to building an innovative, creative and dynamic province, and this government holds an unwavering commitment to building a province that is based upon a solid foundation of shared values, shared ideals and shared principles.

The hard-working people of this province want to build an Ontario that recognizes the power of the individual to innovate, to create and to bring about inspired and constructive change that improves the human condition. They want to build an Ontario that supports the equality of opportunity, and they want to build an

Ontario where opportunities abound, an Ontario where the government works for the people. They want to build an Ontario that not only supports today's generation but a province that supports the generations of tomorrow and honours those of the past. They want to build an Ontario that provides its people with a hand up and not a handout, as the Premier has said on numerous occasions.

That is why it is crucial that we continue to reform our welfare system, to restore hope and opportunity to the thousands who remain trapped in a cycle of dependency through no fault of their own. That is why we must continue to cut taxes, and that is why we must continue to grow this economy and create jobs. We must invest in our children and give them the best possible start in life. Ontario's strength is the strength of its people.

We must all work to ensure that Ontario families thrive in safe communities. We can talk all we want about giving Ontario and the people who live here, young and old, opportunities they need to be successful in life, but it's nothing more than talk unless we have safe communities to go home to and to work in.

I want to say to you very clearly and emphatically that crime is a very real concern to the people of Willowdale. The devastating reality of violent crime came home to the people of my riding this past summer when Police Constable Patrick Ferdinand was gunned down in his heroic pursuit of individuals who affronted the safety of our community.

Let me pause to point out that this event actually occurred within a few blocks of where I live and where my children were at the time. My neighbours, my children, many people within the riding of Willowdale watched as the police, after mustering up every possible resource, arrived in our neighbourhood. Helicopters searched overhead, and many children in the area had their summer day cut short because of the very real fear and concern that existed. The children of our neighbourhood were sent back into their homes and were told to remain there until they received further notice. Crime had come to Willowdale on a very real and a very large scale.

Thankfully, Officer Ferdinand is recovering from his injuries, and he has shown great courage and bravery in his recovery. I had the opportunity to speak to that constable in early September. He indicated to me that he was in fact doing well, all things considered, and he was looking forward to returning to his employment with the Toronto police force in the new year. We are truly lucky in this city and in this province to have such dedicated individuals serving and protecting the public.

In my career as a litigation lawyer, I've had the privilege of representing officers like Constable Ferdinand. While serving as counsel to Metropolitan Toronto Police, and later, as counsel to the Hamilton-Wentworth Regional Police Force, I met many officers who had similar skills and qualities. These brave men and women, these peace officers, risk their lives each and every day to protect the people of this province. As I indicated earlier,

crime is a very real concern and we need to get tough with those who threaten our safety.

I have a petition that we have crafted that I will be circulating throughout the riding of Willowdale over the next few weeks. It's a petition that asks the federal government to pass tougher penalties for crimes committed with firearms. Hundreds of Canadians are harmed or killed by firearms used in the commission of crimes every year. Crimes committed with firearms are becoming an increasing concern facing our communities.

1620

The number of young people injured or killed by firearms is increasing as well. The minimum penalties for crimes committed with firearms do not begin to address the seriousness of these crimes, and law enforcement officials across this country have been asking for tougher, longer minimum sentences.

The minimum sentence for an indictable crime committed with a firearm should be 10 years. We owe it to the constables, to the public and to all those in this province to get tough with violent criminals.

The federal government unfortunately is content to say that violent crime is decreasing. The federal government tells Canadians not to worry because we have an older population, a population that is aging and less likely to commit crimes. This is their excuse for inaction; this is their excuse for pampering criminals. It's not good enough for me and it's not good enough for the people of Willowdale.

Ottawa also turns a blind eye to the frequent and sincere pleas that emanate from residents from across this province and across this country to amend the provisions of the Young Offenders Act. What we need are amendments to ensure that that legislation has appropriate, meaningful and significant penalties that will ensue when teenagers are convicted of serious crimes.

One quarter of all Canadians are afraid to walk the streets at night, and how can we tolerate such? It's clearly unacceptable in a province like ours, in a country like ours. As long as people feel unsafe, crime is a problem. The people of this province told our government that crime was a concern to them in the last election campaign, and we are committed to following through on our Blueprint commitment. We are going to get tough with the federal government about the Young Offenders Act, we're going to strengthen the Victims' Bill of Rights, we're going to set up a sex offenders registry and we're going to make our schools safer. We're also going to try to stop the revolving door that is our federal parole system.

Our government also made a commitment in the throne speech to end aggressive panhandling and to deal with squeegee people. I often hear my colleagues across the floor talk about this issue as one that is not a problem. I disagree. Every person in this province deserves to have the right to feel safe walking along the streets of their neighbourhood. Small business owners deserve to have the right to operate their businesses in peace and their customers have the right not to be harassed.

When we deal with this issue I would ask the members of this assembly and the public in this province to recall that it is not just our government, the members on this side of the floor, who are bringing forward tougher penalties; it is the mayor of Toronto, it is the mayor of many urban centres and it is the police forces in many of these urban centres who are asking for action on this problem.

I want to share with you briefly, if time permits, a very real experience I had with aggressive squeegee people this past summer as I was leaving the Royal Ontario Museum and walking along the street with my wife and my parents. We'd just left the wedding of a family member who got married at the Royal Ontario Museum and we were returning to our vehicles at about 11:30 in the evening. I observed on the roadway not one, not two but three squeegee people harassing various motorists. One in particular took the time to spend with four young women who were in a jeep, and he continually made threats, aggressive behaviour, towards these young women. As long as the light was red—and the traffic was heavy that evening—they had nowhere to go; they had no recourse.

I directed my attention to this individual and, in very short order, he immediately turned his hostilities towards me. He became verbally abusive and clearly threatened. I told him I wasn't interested in a confrontation and I encouraged him to leave the young women alone. Fortunately, with the passage of time the light changed, the jeep moved on and his victims on that occasion had moved on as well because they had the opportunity to do so. I feel that no one in this province should ever have to subject themselves to such behaviour. The people of this city are tired of having to put up with this conduct. We must act now to put an end to this harassment. Our government recognizes that these initiatives represent but one aspect of the issue of crime.

We also know that giving our children a good start in life and giving them the best-quality education go a long way to strengthening our society. As I indicated earlier, I am fortunate to have been appointed as a parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education. I want to point out to you and to the members of this House that I've been active in the field of education prior to that appointment. I was a school trustee for six years with the North York board of education and, more important perhaps, I have three children, all of whom are enrolled in public schools.

I believe in our public education system and I believe in the role it has to play in shaping innovation and creativity among our young. Our province's success in the next millennium is contingent upon us giving our children and grandchildren the tools they need to be successful, the skills they need to further build and strengthen the social, the cultural and the economic fabric of Ontario.

We are just starting down the road to recovery in this province. Ontario has come a long way since 1995, and we all need to work together for an even brighter future. I believe that Ontario has now seen a throne speech that

sets out the road map to a brighter future for the people of this province. The people of this great province deserve and expect a decisive, proactive government that faces the challenges of today and tomorrow with focused determination. Our government will continue to fight for hard-working Ontario families.

Mr Speaker, I also wanted to use some of my remaining time to address another issue.

As we approach Remembrance Day, I'd just like to take the last few minutes of my time here this afternoon to talk about those brave men and women who fought so that we can all sit in this chamber filled with elected representatives.

They fought for a country as free, open and democratic as ours is today. We sometimes take for granted just how privileged we are to live in a country as great as Canada. We wear these red poppies to show that we remember those men and women who made it possible for us to be free. It is because of their courage, it is because of their sacrifice, that we are able to sit here in this chamber this day. We owe our war veterans our eternal gratitude. We owe it to them to keep their memory and sacrifice alive in our hearts. We owe it to them to keep their memory alive in our minds. We must all teach our children about the sacrifices made by generations past so that their memory lives on.

Our veterans should take great pride in knowing that their sacrifices have made Canada a source of inspiration to people everywhere for its leadership, for its respect and for its acceptance of diversity. Our veterans had the courage, conviction and faith to face humanity in its darkest hour, but they persevered and the flame of hope and peace lives on today.

The Deputy Speaker: Comments or questions?

Ms Di Cocco: In response to the member for Willowdale, it's a pleasure to hear the number of new members that I've been listening to who have a great deal of idealism and take a look at a philosophical approach to what government is about. We all have done one thing; we have something in common, and that is that we've all come to this chamber because we've been elected by constituents in our own ridings.

I believe in the spirit of change, as the honourable member has stated, but nonetheless, change for the sake of change is not what government is about. I agree with the fact that we do work for people, but it's the interpretation of what it means to work for people that I have a problem with when it comes to the member for Willowdale.

When we make comments in this House about "real people" who deserve real benefit, or if we talk about squeegee kids in a manner that is quite—in my estimation, it's aggressive in its nature to talk about squeegee kids. I don't come from Toronto, but nevertheless I have had squeegee kids come and clean my windshield. I have absolutely no problem and have never had an aggressive squeegee kid come to my car. It's good government, by the way, that understands that weak people need

assistance, not marginalization and not frightening the general public as to dramatizing what it is that they do.

The template from the throne speech, by the way, when we talk about working for people, does not even mention seniors.

1630

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education): I rise to make a couple of quick points in our response time. First of all, I'd like to congratulate the member for Willowdale on a very fine beginning speech. As Minister of Education, I am indeed very honoured to be served by someone who has the capabilities and the talent and, obviously, the deft touch in political matters that Mr Young does. I'd also like to say that his words about those veterans who sacrificed so we could stand here today are very, very well considered and well put as we enter Remembrance Day ceremonies next week. In the town of Ajax, where I live, we had the privilege of hosting the veterans from the HMS Ajax, which was one of the battleships at the River Plate battle. To see those elderly gentlemen be honoured by the town for what they did was indeed a wonderful, wonderful experience, and they certainly enjoyed themselves immensely and much appreciated the gesture from the community.

That's one of the reasons we've also made sure, in the elementary and secondary curriculum, that the contributions and sacrifices of not only our veterans but of the other individuals in World War II are recognized in schools so that children appreciate the freedom we have and can understand what it means and understand how careful we have to be, as a society and as a country, to make sure that we never, ever lose that.

I think the member for Willowdale made some excellent points, and I look forward to hearing the other comments from the new members on the speech from the throne.

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): I rise to make comment about the member for Willowdale's first speech in the House. I commend him on his election victory and I welcome him to Queen's Park. It is a role that you should always cherish. There are not that many of us here in the province of Ontario over time who have had a chance to represent people from a riding and indeed, by extension, the whole of this province. I know you'll work hard at making wise decisions not only for your riding and the people who live there, but also for those beyond your riding and throughout the whole of Ontario: north, south, east and west.

I noted that you remarked that you are an assistant to the minister, and I would hope that you would work hard to recall the valuable role that each and every one of our schools in Ontario plays within their communities, whether it's rural or urban. Romney school in my former riding of Essex-Kent closed, and I met people recently who still are very disturbed and saddened and actually find it difficult to drive by that school as it remains empty on that rural setting that they have there. So I would urge you always to recall the importance of rural and urban schools throughout Ontario, wherever that may be. It is a

centre of their community; it means a lot to the people who live there.

As well, in your role as assistant to the minister I would ask you to recall the children who get on the school buses every day and be reminded that those children need protection and a conviction mechanism against those people who pass school buses while those red lights are flashing. I ask you to look at my bill that I introduced and will continue to introduce in this House until the government allows it to be passed.

Ms Churley: I just want to know what it is with this guys across the floor—and women—from the Tory caucus with squeegee kids. They must all have a big bumper sticker on the back of their car saying, "We hate squeegee kids," because every one of them has terrible stories to tell about the horrible ordeals they've experienced with squeegee kids. What is it with you guys?

Let me read you a letter. Let's put a different perspective on this. I admit sometimes it can be annoying, but I'm in my car behind a big hunk of steel. What are they going to do to me, for heaven's sake? Let me put another perspective on this. Here's a letter that was written in, I think it was, the Kitchener-Waterloo paper.

"Gesture Was Appreciated"

"Our family had a sudden loss of a dear family member. As our funeral procession travelled in well-marked vehicles, many cars broke into our line. Most people showed no respect as we passed. But not the squeegee kids at the corner of Erb and Weber streets in Waterloo. As we passed them, they stopped their work, faced us and took off their hats as a show of respect. I can't thank them enough or tell them how much their gesture meant to our family. Parents should show their children how to properly respond to another person's loss. It will only take a minute of their time, and means so much."

There is another perspective on squeegee kids. Let's not ignore that some of those people are out there because they don't have any choices. This government, instead of focusing on the real problems—that is, the widening gap between the rich and the poor, the homeless crisis, the housing crisis, the difficulties these young people have in getting work and the kinds of supports that they need—get up and make all these horrible noises about being frightened by squeegee kids. Come on, guys. Give me a break. Grow up.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): The member for Willowdale.

Mr Young: I thank the members opposite and my colleagues on this side of the floor for their kind words. I appreciate that the honeymoon is—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: This is a maiden speech. Perhaps we could all be a little better behaved.

Mr Young: I was going to say the honeymoon is almost over; I guess I can now say the honeymoon is over. But I do thank the members for their kind words.

I wish to mention as well that the problem with aggressive panhandling and the squeegee people that has

been discussed over the last few minutes and is certainly discussed and addressed in the throne speech is one that I have had an opportunity to talk about with various members of our community, including a number of police officers at 32 division in North York, or as it then was. They told me very clearly that they needed the necessary tools to deal with these people. They told me that as currently constituted, the Criminal Code simply doesn't have appropriate provisions that will allow them to address this. They talked to me about the paraphernalia that generally surrounds these panhandlers and squeegee people. This does not only include squeegees; it includes hypodermic needles and other items that would not only be unsafe for the individuals who are harassing others in their preoccupation, but are unsafe for the community at large as they walk by, whether or not those squeegee people happen to be there at that time.

I'm proud to say that this government will be bringing in effective legislation to deal with this issue. Then we can move on. But this is an issue that the people of Willowdale and certainly the people of most of Ontario want addressed, and we will address it shortly.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Hoy: I'm pleased to rise today in response to the throne speech put forth by the government. Let me first of all say how proud and privileged—

Interjection.

Mr Hoy: Oh, I would like to ask for unanimous consent to share my time with the members for Windsor West and Windsor-St Clair.

The Acting Speaker: Agreed?

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order. Agreed.

Mr Hoy: And I am proud and honoured to ask for that unanimous consent.

Let me say that I am proud, privileged and honoured to have represented the people of Essex-Kent from 1995 to 1999, and I thank the people of Chatham-Kent Essex for the opportunity to represent them in this Legislature at this time. I will continue to work hard for the issues that concern them the most, and will always advance for all the people of Chatham-Kent Essex their issues, their concerns, and bring them here to Queen's Park, where all can listen to their concerns and pass legislation, if need be, to bring about change that will make life better for the people of Chatham-Kent Essex.

1640

I noted in the throne speech, and I was very disappointed, that there was no direct reference to what is happening on the 401, a major highway within Ontario, specifically as it pertains to how occurrences are happening—death and injury—in Chatham-Kent Essex. The government needs to move quickly and put all of its resources into play immediately. Three more people were killed just this week in southern Ontario on the 401, tragically so, perhaps because there was no centre barrier to protect the people when a car went through the median into the oncoming lane and tragically killed two others. We need a paved and level shoulder on both sides of the

highway in Chatham-Kent Essex. We need ripple strips and extra lanes because of the increased volumes that surely will grow throughout the region.

Eight thousand petitions from the CAA were presented to the Minister of Transportation in regard to change that is required on the 401. I presented 500 petitions from the Chatham Daily News here today to the Premier, asking for changes within the 401. I myself have 5,000 safety questionnaires that we are now tabulating as to the responses given in those questionnaires, which we also will put to the government. Clearly, with these thousands upon thousands of requests for change and upgrades that are meaningful to Highway 401, which continue to pour into the government, they must act swiftly. They must put all of the resources of the Ministry of Transportation in place.

As well, I want to talk about health care. I talk to people who attend the hospitals within my riding who talk about long waits at our emergency rooms. Clearly, we need more doctors. I have one rural doctor who has 7,000 patients, and he desperately needs to have help. As well, hospital deficits—and my hospital is no different. They suffer from \$800 million worth of deficits.

I also want to talk about agriculture, which is so very important to Chatham-Kent Essex in particular, as well as the whole of Ontario. This government likes to stand up and bash Ottawa. The minister did it today, and he did it again last week. He stood up and bashed Ottawa. However, I want to remind the government that agriculture represents to Ontario 6% of the GDP, yet this government returns only half of 1% to the agricultural ministry and therefore to the farmers. The Minister of Agriculture does not stand up and defend safety nets. He does not stand up and say what he will do about market revenue, which is so important to our farmers. He does not stand up and say, "I will keep those agricultural offices open." He does not stand up and say, "I am going to meet with the people who are concerned about the Ridgetown College of Agricultural Technology and their millennium project." He has not stood up and said he would meet with them.

As well, I want to say that we need to protect our rural schools—they are most important—our urban schools and JK. As well, we need to protect our young people who are riding on our school buses daily. I hope the government will listen to those calls from my riding and throughout Ontario for changes and a conviction mechanism for school bus safety.

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): First, I want to say to all the people who live in the riding of Windsor West how pleased I am to have been returned to my seat in this prior election. I'm very pleased to be back again with my colleague from Windsor-St Clair. Our newly named ridings are larger. I welcome all of the new constituents into my riding, and on behalf of myself and Dalton McGuinty, we are thrilled to be able to represent the area, frankly the bulk of southwestern Ontario, in a truly Liberal manner.

The people who live in Windsor West understand full well what our issues have been and what they will continue to be over this term. I want to commit to all of the people who live in Windsor West, even those who didn't vote for me, that I will be advancing their issues here at Queen's Park for this entire term.

I want to say special thanks to those people who truly are not political, who came out in a very fulsome way during the last campaign to help and to vote. To all of those people who helped me and those who hoped for me, I want to thank you especially because it's truly an honour for me to be here as the MPP for Windsor West.

As well, I want to thank my federal colleague Herb Gray, who has shown us the way in Windsor West for absolutely decades. I'm very pleased to have the same namesake riding as my federal colleague.

I want to say at the outset that the kinds of issues I'll be following are much the same as I have been on over the last four years. The people of Windsor West will know that those include a significant portion of health care and all the issues that surround health care. What affects our area specifically, and what affected our area first and is now a crisis right across Ontario, is the issue of doctor shortage, the issue of bringing in foreign-trained doctors to work in our area, in particular in designated underserviced areas. We feel that the provincial government can go much further in advancing their cause than they have to date, and I expect to be pushing that issue for this entire time.

I also want to talk about institutional care like hospitals and the debt our hospitals in Windsor are now facing. Despite any talk by the provincial government, the issues for us are still the same: Reinvestment in our communities was not made when they made cuts to our hospital budgets. Our community has not been able to respond to the cuts made in health care and, as a result, there are still people who are waiting in emergency lineups, who still cannot access a family doctor, who still cannot get through to some very basic primary care, and that is having a huge impact on the overall kind of health services that are available to the people who live in Windsor West. Over time, we have offered solutions to this. We expect that the government will listen and, when it doesn't, we're going to continue to push for those issues.

I want to say that in the middle of my riding is an enormous road called Huron Church Road, which is under intense scrutiny these days because it can truly be a death trap as it leads the public up to the 401 corridor. This is the most significant trade crossing in the nation, and it is square in the middle of my riding. We have the largest share of international trade that goes across the Ambassador Bridge and the Detroit-Windsor tunnel, and we feel that infrastructure is required and we'll be pushing for that as well.

Before I close, I have to say that there are issues of significant interest to us in both Windsor-St Clair and Windsor West, and we expect to be the voice of labour for the people who come from our community. All of the

labour community ought to understand that they have a strong voice here at Queen's Park, and we will be here to represent their interests.

We had a great opportunity in the last term to advocate for children, and I expect to continue that fight for kids, not just in Windsor but right across Ontario.

As well, the environment is finally coming up on the radar screen. In Windsor we have been dealing with environmental issues for some time. I'm pleased that we have such a coalition of people who are advocating for the environment, and we expect that is going to be a major part of our work at our office in Windsor West.

Thank you very much for this opportunity for a general outline. I hope we'll continue to serve the people in Windsor West in a very effective manner.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): I too am pleased to have the opportunity to join the throne speech debate. Let me begin by thanking the good people of Windsor-St Clair who have sent me here to represent them. I look forward to working not only with my colleagues on this side of the House but indeed with the government members as we pursue issues of interest not only to my whole community but to the province at large.

I'm especially proud to have my colleague from Essex, my colleague from Windsor West and my colleague from Chatham-Kent Essex here. I'm pleased to note that for the first time in the post-war period, all of Essex county has returned Liberals both federally and provincially. I think it's a tribute to the work and the efforts of all of those people doing the right thing.

Mr Speaker, I know that you're a man who is fastidious about the rules. So allow me to begin by addressing the specifics of the throne speech. Let me begin by complimenting the government on some aspects of it. I was particularly pleased with the support of improvements to organ donation. We note that last spring a life-saving transplant was cancelled due to a lack of ICU space. I hope, in addition to that commitment, that the government will recommit money to health care in much greater amounts than they have promised to date.

1650

I'm also glad to hear that the government has copied our plan to offer free tuition to students promising to work in underserviced areas. Unfortunately, by waiting until the October throne speech we've probably delayed implementation by a year, and communities like mine, Windsor and Essex county, will continue to be underserviced for many years to come. It's unfortunate the government waited so long.

I listened with great interest to the government's priorities. The government wants to go after 200 to 300 squeegee kids in downtown Toronto, I guess. That's an important issue; it's an issue the people of Toronto want addressed. We'll look forward to seeing their legislation. We expect to see it tomorrow. We think it's important to take the time in the Legislature to deal with that.

I was disappointed, however, that this government did not address in a meaningful way, in our view, the questions of health care and education. Just this week, as

I was preparing my notes for tonight, I noted in our local newspaper, "Hospitals Seek Deficit Relief." Today, the Minister of Health indicated that in fact monies had gone up for hospitals, but what the Ontario Hospital Association has said—and 75 hospitals across this province, including Hotel-Dieu Grace in Windsor and Windsor Regional—is that money hasn't gone up, money has been cut, and that these hospitals are choosing between life-saving treatments and meeting the minister's objective of a balanced budget.

Now, yes, the minister will say we've increased funding for this, that or the other thing, but let me just tell you what's been going on in Windsor and let me read you some quotes about the service reductions we expect in our local hospitals.

"Hotel-Dieu Grace, in addition to cuts, has experienced increase in costs." These costs are due to more people at the door. When somebody is sick, you just can't close the door and say, "Sorry, we've run out of money."

The point we're making here, at Hotel-Dieu Grace and at Windsor Regional, is that the number of people showing up at the door continues to increase, yet the government spins a web, a tangled web, that really doesn't address the problems but deals in the political rhetoric of the whiz kids and fails in a meaningful way to address our concerns.

I want to talk about education for a minute, an issue that's facing this entire province. Last Thursday night my colleague from Essex attended a meeting about special education. We have heard the Minister of Education in this House say that there haven't been cuts. Well, let me read you the headline: "Parents Make Tearful Funding Plea." These are the parents of special-needs kids who aren't accessing services in their schools that they so desperately need, services which were much more readily available before this government took office.

But this government has its priorities: It wants to get squeegee kids—it wants to focus on squeegee kids in Toronto—and the government wants to cut taxes. Let's talk about cutting taxes and let's talk about balancing budgets for a minute in this discussion.

The government has introduced a taxpayer protection act, and one of the provisions of that act is that a cabinet minister will get docked pay if they don't have a balanced budget. But what have they done? They're not making that effective until the year 2001. We've had six years of deficits that could have been eliminated two years ago had this government been prudent in its tax cuts and waited for the right time. Instead, they add \$20 billion-some-odd to the province's debt, which is not good management at all.

The Premier, in the throne speech, has promised \$20 billion in capital expenditure over the next five years, with \$10 billion from the government and \$10 billion from the private sector under the SuperBuild fund. Based on our experience with the 407 sale—let's look at this. Let's see what happened to the taxpayers. We sold it and we got \$3.1 billion from the private sector for a road that

cost \$1.5 billion to build, and an extra \$1.6 billion went into the campaign-selling job. The purchaser got a good deal; the taxpayers didn't, necessarily. That's the bottom line.

In the coming three to four years, we look forward to having the opportunity to discuss what we do with emerging surpluses, how we balance tax cuts with hospitals and education. I can tell you that the people in my constituency reaffirmed in the spring on June 3 that they want a more balanced approach. They want an approach that recognizes that with a surplus there comes a need not only to cut taxes, but to reinvest in services and to lower the debt. We pay interest on the debt just like any consumer debtor does, and it's our obligation as a Legislature and a government to manage the debt with the kind of prudence that has been exhibited by the federal government, a government that this gang likes to criticize all the time.

Let me tell you, under your legislation their cabinet wouldn't have to be getting docked pay for not balancing the budget. Their ratio of debt to GDP is coming down; ours isn't yet, because you had your priorities wrong. You chose instead to borrow to finance your tax cut. That made no sense. You could have balanced the budget two years ago. We could be in a position today to be talking about reinvesting in health care. We could be talking about other things, because there would be a surplus. This government has chosen as its priority squeegee kids.

It's really interesting, because they want to come down hard on squeegee kids and they want to come down hard on other criminal types, but they'll leave a convicted tax evader in the cabinet for three weeks without any kind of public comment. That's a double standard. They want to have it both ways. They want to pick on squeegee kids, but it's all right, when there are serious allegations before the provincial police, to leave a cabinet minister in cabinet for three weeks. That is not the right approach. Frankly, the people in my community reject that kind of approach. They rejected it loudly, they rejected it clearly, and they rejected it in larger numbers than they did in 1995.

As we indicated, our concerns in Windsor and Essex county are going to be our hospitals. It's going to be Hotel-Dieu Grace and Windsor regional. It's going to be dealing with the deficit in a meaningful way so people can access services. It's going to be about our schools, whether it's a Catholic school or a public school. Our Catholic board is faced now with closing a number of additional schools. W.D. Lowe high school remains on the block because of the government's funding formula.

Finally, I'd like to say that the people of my community want an end to the kind of tactics this government has approached with teachers and many others, people of goodwill and good spirit in our community and across the province, who want to be partners not only in education but in health care. This province ought not to be an us-versus-them province; it ought to be a province where all of us work together to find solutions. As they're scapegoating squeegee kids now, they scapegoated teachers

and others in the past term. We're going to fight it just like we fought it for the last four years, because we think there's a better way, and we've spelled that out.

Ms Churley: I was most interested in the speech from the member for Chatham-Kent Essex and his plea for this government to bring back photo radar. The issue is one of prime importance, as the member pointed out. This has been an issue that he has been concerned about for some time, and in the last government called for photo radar. If you will recall, when the NDP was in government, we did decide to bring it in. At the time, both opposition parties—at that time, as you know, the Tories were in opposition, in the third party—were opposed to that.

There are a lot of new members in the House, and the member for Chatham-Kent Essex is one of them. There are a lot of new members in the House on the Tory side as well. This is an opportunity to have your voices heard loud and clear. This is a proven technology. We do not have the funds—as you very well know, when you pick your priorities on that side of the government, where you're going to spend taxpayers' money—to hire enough police to keep constant vigilance on aggressive drivers and other problems on that highway.

I must come back to squeegee kids again, because you are willing to spend resources in going after what you call "aggressive panhandlers," but you're not willing to invest in a technology that's out there and used in jurisdictions to stop aggressive driving, which is actually killing people. Just think about that for a moment.

I would plead with members from all sides of the House, in particular the new Tory members, to help us in the opposition bring back photo radar so lives can, literally, be saved.

1700

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): Hey, Chris.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): Thank you, Rosario, I appreciate that. It's always good to sit in the same chamber as you.

I want to go on about this argument that was put forward by the member for Windsor-St Clair. This whole argument with respect to the tax cuts and the generation and the debt and so on is what we campaigned on; this was the election. Now, your campaign leader, Mr McGuinty, was very vocal, very vociferous with respect to this debate, and I commend him, as I commend Mr Hampton. He was very vociferous with respect to the approach this government took in the preceding four years. But let's be clear: The campaign was had, the debate was taken and the people voted. They voted in favour of the approach that was adopted by the government, and whether you agree or disagree is truly academic.

Ms Churley: So we should all go home, Chris?

Hon Mr Stockwell: No. The point I'm putting to you, the member for Riverdale, who suggests, with the squeegee kids, it's OK because she's not intimidated, so no woman should be intimidated by squeegee kids—if

that isn't a self-serving argument proffered by an NDPer. I'm shocked. My constituents are nervous about squeegee kids, they're women, and because you don't like their points of view, you're suggesting they are unacceptable points of view because they are women who aren't sharing your point of view. I suggest, coming from a woman in your caucus, that's a very unusual position to take.

Further, the revenues have gone up. There is \$6 billion more in revenues. So with the tax cuts, with the reductions—I agree there were reductions, but you can't argue, revenues were up; you may argue why. But at the end of the day the position proffered by the government was that revenues would increase if you allow the economic indicators to prosper. The debate was over. We've had that election. You supported tax cuts. It's ended. Move on.

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): It's great to see the Minister of Labour back to his old self. We haven't seen that in this Legislature for maybe even perhaps too long.

I was interested in the Minister of Labour's comments about the election. I can recall when he was Speaker, and he was a fine Speaker, he came to us on the basis, and wanted to be elected on the basis, that he protected the rights of individual legislators. Now it would seem to be that it's changed a little bit, because he's simply saying that they campaigned on tax reduction and those other items, the vote was taken, and the debate is over. That would indicate to me that he feels this Legislature is rather insignificant. You know, with the changes that have been made over this government's tenure, the last four years, I'm inclined to agree that that is their attitude, that this Legislature has become rather irrelevant in their view and that when we bring issues to them, like health care and education—I sat at that forum last Thursday night. These parents were true and honest in what they brought before us. When we bring those issues before this Legislature, and we bring them about Highway 401, the deaths on Highway 401, they aren't irrelevant. The debate isn't over. This Legislature does have something to say, and just because it doesn't happen to agree with the philosophy of your government doesn't mean that you're always right.

A majority of the people in this province didn't vote for you. We have two other parties. We have a responsibility to bring to you those issues. The debate is not over.

The Acting Speaker: Response?

Mr Duncan: I want to thank my colleagues the member from Riverdale, the Minister of Labour and my colleague from Essex. I would like to reinforce what my colleague from Essex has said: The debate is not over. To the Minister of Labour, the deficit is not gone. This government's record on the deficit is akin to that of the government of British Columbia, the last two provinces to balance their books—absolutely scandalous. You guys got along well with the NDP, and we see where it got them in the last election, but let me tell you something: It's not over. The deficit won't be over for at least

another seven or eight months. The fact is that it could have been over two years ago.

The Minister of Labour likes to suggest that revenues have been going up and up because of their government, never mind the growth in the US economy, and at the same time they criticize the federal Liberals. Never mind that. All the more reason why it should have been balanced before there were tax cuts. Our position has been clear and unequivocal on that right from the very beginning.

Tax cuts, when the budget is balanced—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: It works much better if we have only one speaker at a time.

Mr Duncan: I say to my colleague and friend the Minister of Labour that yes, you campaigned on it, but you didn't campaign on closing 39 hospitals. In fact, Mike Harris said we wouldn't close any hospitals: "It's not my intention to close any hospitals." You didn't campaign on cutting special-needs student funding in our school systems. That's where we part company, I say to the minister, and that's where we think the investments should be made. That's why we think the tax cut was at best imprudent and, at worst, it was a downright folly at the time you did it when you had these pressing needs and you continued to run deficits. So I say, Minister, give up your pay for the years in which you've run a deficit.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Marchese: It's good to be back. This is my first opportunity to say a few words on the throne speech.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Stop the clock. You're right. Actually, put it back to the 20. Now perhaps we could try it again slightly more quietly.

Mr Marchese: Now there is a Speaker who deserves my respect, because he realizes that even losing a couple of seconds is critical to the opposition. Although it means nothing to the government, to the opposition it means a whole lot. I appreciate the respect and the support, Speaker.

This is my first opportunity. Member from Etobicoke Centre, it's good to see you here, and I want you to do two minutes every time we speak, because I enjoy it; it's important. Otherwise, the liveliness of this place simply dies down and it's boring, right? So I need you. Remember.

Given that we only have a few minutes to talk on this issue and it's really tough for the opposition, I'm going to focus on two issues. Because there's so much to say, I'm going to focus on the tax cuts, first of all, and then talk about the squeegee kids. The member from Windsor-St Clair talked about this earlier and I want to raise a few other issues with respect to it.

On the issue of the tax cuts, the member from Etobicoke Centre says that this debate is over. That debate is not going to be over for a hell of a long time. I've got to tell you this: In the next recession—I'm not advocating for one, and there will be another recession—when \$9 billion goes out to the general public—the little

people, as you folks say, right?—with \$9 billion going out and very little coming in, it's going to be a disaster for us. The folks are going to say: "What the hell happened here? When did this happen? Where did all the money go?" The member for Etobicoke Centre will be able to say, "I told a few of the folks in my caucus that it may not have been such a good idea, but they didn't listen to me." They should have listened to members who were very cautious about that. I think the member for Etobicoke Centre and others in your caucus probably are very cautious, and ought to be, because when recessions come, money doesn't come into provincial coffers, which means you're short a whole lot of money. When you don't have the pecunia in your hands, you're going to have to cut a whole lot of other services. You've cut deeply already, but what are you going to do when \$9 billion is going out every year?

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke North): Where do you get this number of \$9 billion?

Mr Marchese: I'm sorry, where is my good buddy coming from? Etobicoke North, John—

The Acting Speaker: Would you please direct your comments to the Chair.

1710

Mr Marchese: Through you, Speaker, to the member for Etobicoke North: He's always puzzled by some of the points I make. I understand the puzzlement, but we've got to talk to the public. I don't speak to him, Speaker; I speak to the public. You understand that. Whether he's puzzled or not is irrelevant to me.

What's relevant is that the public is paying attention to this very fact: Money is going out every year. They are lucky that the economy is strong enough to be able to sustain the tax cuts and the \$6 billion that's going out, but when it's not good, when the economy falls through the ground and there's no more money, we are all in trouble. When these ministers and these members are no longer députés but just regular folk, they're going to feel it as well.

All you hear from these members and ministers when they speak is the following: "We need tax cuts. We need more tax cuts. We're not doing enough to cut taxes."

Interjections.

Mr Marchese: I hear you. I'm just repeating it for your sake.

They've got the Reform members at the federal level helping them out because their voices are not strong enough; Reform, day after day, saying little people are not earning enough, they need tax cuts. We've been saying to the Reform Party that the tax cuts as perpetrated by this government are not going to the little guys who are making \$30,000—

Hon Mr Stockwell: Where are they going?

Mr Marchese: To the big boys.

Hon Mr Stockwell: The big boys?

Mr Marchese: Mostly boys. The CEOs are doing very well. I've got a Toronto Star article, because I want to be fair, and I've a Globe and Mail article to show that there's balance in this place. The title of the Star article says—

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: Please, member for Etobicoke North, a little patience.

"Pay Gap Growing: CEOs average \$354,000 a year." They're doing OK.

Hon Mr Stockwell: It's free enterprise.

Mr Marchese: Of course, you're quite right. You are the non-government government, and you should step out of the way and be the good mechanics that you are and just let the economy do its magic, let the market do the work. You're quite right. You are the non-government government. It's a lovely, paradoxical thing, to be a non-government government, but only Tories can do that. I used to think that only Liberals could play that kind of paradoxical game, but you guys are good. We were a government, but you people say, "We are not a government; we are non-government government." Interesting stuff. I'm sure the public loves it.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Whatever you were we don't want to be.

Mr Marchese: Where we will be at the end of your tax cuts in the next turn of events is somewhere where I don't want to be and the majority of the people in Ontario won't want to be either. But for them it will be too late.

"Pay Gap Growing: CEOs average \$354,000 a year. Consumer prices in Toronto are rising 2.7% yearly, but top executives expect to increase their pay on an average 4% on base salary and more through strong bonus systems and other perks." They're doing OK.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: The member for Etobicoke North's buddies are doing OK.

I have another article. This is a Globe and Mail article. The other one is biased, right? But this one, of course, is more neutral, and I do this for your benefit. The title of this says that top earners say "hats off" to the economy. But those at the low end aren't making the same gains in income growth, savings and debt reduction. We have a big, big gap. CEOs and your brothers and sisters in the top 10% are doing great with the tax cuts. These top earners say, "Hats off to you, boys," and women who are part of that caucus. But those at the low end aren't feeling the same way.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: John, good to see you.

This article says that that's the paradox of Canada's economic expansion of the past few years, during your reign of terror. While those at the top end of the income scale have experienced unprecedented success, many have been left out. But to hear the Tory missionaries, or mercenaries, they're doing OK. The people at the low end are doing fine. Would you not say, member for Etobicoke North, that the folks at the low end are—

Hon Mr Stockwell: Tax and spend.

Mr Marchese: Taxes, yes. OK. The problem is that these tax cuts have not been proven to do the things you people say they're doing. It's a good mantra. I've got to tell you, you're not the only ones. The corporate press is producing yards of columns on the corporate mantra,

quoting lobbyists for tax cuts, forums for tax cuts, polls for tax cuts, MPs and MPPs for tax cuts, the Reform Party. The poor forests are falling down. They can't keep up with your corporate buddies constantly screaming for tax cuts. Will somebody save the trees from these hackers?

Interjections.

Mr Marchese: I think they are doing well by a few of their friends and a whole lot of people are being hurt.

I've got to tell you, for the benefit of the new Liberal members, that the NDP had a clear position. You guys are good on contradictions, but the Liberals are usually better. We argued that tax cuts were bad. They did too, you will remember.

Interjections.

Mr Marchese: They weren't going to do anything. It's hard for me as a New Democrat, sitting beside them, to hear them constantly saying the same things we say. But when they are asked, "What are you going to do about the tax cuts?" they say exactly what you said, Minister: "Nothing." You've got to expose the problem to the good folk who are listening to this program with a keen interest that there are wide differences.

I'm not a friend of Tories. Although I have been seen to befriend a few from time to time, I'm no friend to politicos on the other side who are rabid Reform types. I don't support that ideology whatsoever. But I don't support Liberal politics that are inconsistent or not rooted on earth. I don't support that either. I want to say that for the record.

What I want to say to the public is that they need to demand of Tories that they produce facts, research that says because of these tax cuts we have produced so many jobs. I have challenged each and every Tory in this regard. Not one member, including the minister from Etobicoke Centre and others, has produced any evidence that says, "We produced 100,000 jobs because of tax cuts." All we get is anecdotal evidence. They say it's a proven fact. Well, if it's proven, show me the facts.

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): The Conference Board of Canada.

1720

Mr Marchese: New member in that caucus: When you come, bring that paper. Read it to me, for my benefit, OK?

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: Yes, I know. This is part of the debate. We need you to be able to bring this research into this House that says, "Here is the study." I don't want you to come and say, "The Bank of Canada said this." If they tell me tax cuts are good, that doesn't help me. It only benefits their CEOs. The fact that the banks say that only proves my point that you boys are serving their interests, that you are in collusion with each other.

Interjections.

Mr Marchese: But you are. You serve each other very well, and they love you guys. I've got to tell you I don't get any campaign contributions from them.

Hon Mr Baird: You represent the big banks.

Mr Marchese: They're all in my district.

Moving on to squeegee kids, because I don't have much time left to hear these Tories, including my good buddy from Etobicoke Centre, please: Mel Lastman says that women are terrified of these squeegee kids. To hear Mel, to hear the Premier of this province and to hear some other members, people are just terrified: "Good God, we've got to clean the streets." So our new Tory millennium project is to deal with this millennial scourge which is squeegee kids. It's the millennial scourge. In fact, they are so evil that we've got to deal with this because, I've got to tell you, these squeegee kids are corrupting society. Dare I say they are helping to produce moral decay? One of your members on a television program said, "Moral decay." I tell you I was out of my seat. I wanted to jump. Squeegee kids connected to moral decay? I held myself in because it was a bit funny, right? It is so extreme.

Mike Harris, the Premier, and Mel are terrified about these things and we've got to do something about it. In the scheme of things, my friends, in the scheme of where we should devote our energies and our resources to deal with real problems—

Hon Mr Stockwell: That's because there are so few of you.

Mr Marchese: Oh, yes, but that's a different matter. The fact that there are few of us is irrelevant in terms of what I'm saying, Minister. That's what I call in Latin a non sequitur. It's quite apart from that.

If we talk about moral decay, I think drugs would be something that people could identify with as contributing to moral decay. I'd certainly connect to that. Drugs—cocaine and other addictive substances of that sort—I think are bad for the individual, for the families they destroy and for society; and the cost to us all, I tell you, that's the scourge. But to hear these folks talk about, "We need more cops so we can go and clean up the streets because we've got a new moral decay happening here: the squeegee kids"—do you follow the logic? We've got a problem.

Hon Mr Stockwell: This isn't complicated, Rosario.

Mr Marchese: It's not complicated? But if you're following my logic, Minister, I need to hear in your two minutes some intelligent or intelligible rebuttal. For you to tell me or to tell my colleague, "Look, some of your folks are not terrified but mine are," I don't know. That's not an intelligent answer, just to be helpful.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: It is not. Women are not terrified. What they're terrified of are other things. They're terrified of having break-ins where they are in some cases violated. To have somebody come into their room, that's a serious violation. To have serial rapists out in the streets damaging, violating people's lives, that's serious in the scheme of things.

Interjection: Yes, it is.

Mr Marchese: Yes, it is. But if you're going to go and hire more cops to go after panhandlers and squeegee kids, in the scheme of what is a scourge, you guys have

got it all wrong. Speaker, help me out. Sometimes the dialogue is difficult with these fine members across the way. It gets complicated.

Interjections.

Remarks in Italian.

Ms Churley: What did he say, Speaker?

Mr Marchese: It was just an exchange. This is a multilingual and multicultural House here. We're lucky to have so many different languages—actually not that many. They are only a couple of extra languages that a few of us speak.

On the tax cuts, we've got a serious problem and we don't have it now. At least it's not as noticeable. You haven't been able to deal with the deficit because the money is going to the tax cuts. That's one problem. People are not seeing the problem yet because you have been lucky enough that the economy has been working, because of the tax cuts, you say. You've been lucky for other reasons but, that aside, the next recession will be our biggest test, and you know what my fear is? That New Democrats might be lucky again to be in power after the scourge of Conservative politics having befallen all Ontarians. That's what I am afraid of. I don't want to be there when that happens; I just tell you I don't want to be there.

On the issue connected to squeegee kids, one of the things that we say as New Democrats is that housing is a key part of that solution. It's not the only solution. Young people are on the streets and they do not only have one problem, they have many problems, and it isn't just housing. Housing will not fix that by itself. And it's not just a matter of saying they need a job, as we sometimes simplistically say. They need a job, they need housing, they need other supports. People on the streets don't have the same kinds of lives that we do. Most of these young people have been burdened with different problems, but housing is key.

You boys often quote the US as an example of some of the solutions that you find. I've got to tell you that in most other major cities in the US they're investing billions of dollars in housing. Both at the federal level and at the state level they are investing billions on housing. Why can't you people learn from them when they're doing good things? Why is it that you only pick up those things that are insidious, pernicious and evil, for God's sake?

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: OK, Chris, "evil" is too strong. I take it back. You're quite right. "Pernicious," though? It's less.

Hon Mr Stockwell: It's less. OK.

Mr Marchese: Nevertheless, you pick up only the things that destroy this province instead of picking up some of the good things they're doing. In this regard, on the issue of housing—

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: I'm almost done, there are only a few seconds. We're talking to the public; I'm not talking to you folks. Remember that. I want a response from the

public. I don't want a response from you. You're only a major interruption for me from time to time. I only have a few seconds. I'm waiting patiently for the two-minute response from my Tory friend so that we can have a little dialogue here.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Hastings: Once again it's good to be back in this place from a nostalgic perspective, especially with the member for Fort York and whatever else was added on to his riding. I'd like to congratulate him on an excellent performance of pointing out just how bad the NDP government was of its day.

You talk about tax reductions being pernicious. Where was the good in the stupid tax increases we had over the last 10 years, especially when you guys were around? There must have been 69 of them at least. What does a tax increase do? If you look at the recently awarded Nobel Peace Prize winner for economics—a Canadian, at that. Imagine, he had to go to Columbia. We lost a very chief influential economics thinker there. He says that any tax rate in the world—it doesn't matter where it is—above 30% has very, to use your term, member, pernicious effects on an economy—30% and we aren't even there yet. Imagine what you guys had—58%, 60% left, right and centre—and then to come back and say, "Where's the proof?" All you've got to do is connect some of his remarks. Look at the literature and you will find good specific evidence of tax reductions.

With respect to squeegee folks, the member opposite doesn't seem to appreciate how bad some of these folks are in terms of the adverse, fearful impact they have on people. I don't care whether they're women, children or men. When you are threatened—I know members on this side have been; I don't know where you guys have been—it leads to chaos.

1730

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): We're talking about squeegee kids. So far the legacy of this government in 1999 has been that for the first time in the history of the British Commonwealth, in a throne speech, the word "squeegee" has entered the lexicon. Congratulations to my friends on the other side of the House. You have elevated the debate about crime and law and order in this province by making squeegee kids your flagship.

If squeegee kids are your flagship, what about the real crime that's taking place in Ontario, much of which you have caused? Right now in the province of Ontario the probation caseload is 70% higher than anywhere else in the country. That means there are people on the streets who are getting no attention whatsoever from probation workers. When we see the rise in crime over the next four years, we'll be able to lay it at the feet of this government.

Deadbeat dads: This government says they're tough on crime. They were going to hunt down deadbeat dads in 1995, but this government couldn't shoot fish in a barrel when it comes to tracking deadbeat dads. This government tracked down 1% of the deadbeat dads. Quite a feat—1%.

Child porn is on the rise in Toronto. These are serious crimes. The Attorney General of this province was missing in action when judges in British Columbia tore up the laws. But they were there standing beside the gun lobby in the Alberta Court of Appeal, trying to strike down the gun laws in that province, and they're still trying to strike down the gun control laws federally before the Supreme Court of Canada.

Police are being asked to do less with less. Hate crime is on the rise. Organized crime is on the rise. Domestic assault is on the rise. If the government's flagship is squeegee kids, they're going to pay the price.

Ms Churley: It was great to hear from our colleague from his new riding, which is now called Trinity-Spadina. I noticed, though, that he didn't use the word "whack" once. Maybe in your two-minute summary.

I think the government had a plan when they wrote this throne speech. They decided to put squeegee kids in it to deflect from all the important issues that aren't even addressed in the throne speech. You know what? It's working. It was a plan and it's working. We're all standing up going on and on about squeegee kids.

Let me put it to you clearly: Nobody in this House, including me, believes that people should be harassed on the streets. Believe me, as a woman, I have had all kinds of harassment all my adult life walking down the street, so I know what I am talking about when I talk about being harassed.

The issue here is that there are laws in place to deal with that kind of behaviour from anybody who harasses anybody on the street, including the guy who passes me sometimes who tries to give me a free Globe and Mail or a free Post. There are all kinds of people on the street harassing people daily about a whole number of things. There are laws to address that and I think we would all agree that squeegee kids or anybody else should not be scaring people and harassing people.

I'm going to stop talking about that now and get on to a more important subject, which is tax cuts. I know that one day you guys are going to eat your words about tax cuts—absolutely eat them. You have had the good fortune to govern in a time of a good economy. I know you don't believe it, but in this global economy recessions come and go and I'm sorry, my friends, but it's going to happen to you. It's going to be quite interesting to see what you have to say about tax cuts then.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I just want to quickly comment. It's great to hear the member for Trinity-Spadina speak. He's easily one of the most effective speakers in this House. I don't agree about much of what he says, but he says it with such flourish and aplomb that it's wonderful to hear him. He didn't whack us once, which I thought was extremely appropriate.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Stockwell: A little misguided, slightly misguided, completely misguided, sure, but a great guy nonetheless.

Tax cuts—it's wonderful to hear the member from Broadview-Greenwood. Look, if you don't like tax cuts, I suggest you go to the next federal NDP convention and

tell them what a terrible thing it is before they adopt it next time. It's a cold day in Hades in this good country of Canada when the socialist regime led by Alexa McDonough embraces tax cuts. I never thought I'd see that day, and here we are. Hallelujah, when the lefties have bought in, you know time is moving.

It's not often I get to hear a speech from a Liberal, through a Conservative, on how come we are soft on crime. Not one initiative that was instituted by this government—even the NDP, that toughened up the crime topic, was opposed by the Liberals. Every single initiative—even when the dippers were in power, they were too right-wing for you when it came to law and order. Unbelievable. We've got to hear a lecture from our Liberal cohorts about how we're soft on crime and how tough they are.

So we've got the NDP calling for tax cuts; we've got the Liberals telling us we're too soft on crime. We're not too far right. You guys are. The world's gone on its ears backwards. We're getting so many lectures today, we've got to check our compass. Tax cuts, tough on crime. I can't keep it straight but I'm going to hear it from my friend from Trinity. I know he'll straighten me out, because if he doesn't, he'll whack me.

The Acting Speaker: Response?

Mr Marchese: Thank you to those who have intervened. One fellow whacker to another, I think it's great. Two things:

On the whole issue involving tax cuts, you've noticed over the last 10 years people are not getting a wage increase. The corporate world says: "We don't want a wage increase happening here, so what do we do? We've got to call for tax cuts, to keep inflation down." The way the corporate sector wants a wage increase is through us, tax cuts, because they don't want to give people hikes in their salary. That's the reality of it, the member from Etobicoke Centre.

In terms of what the NDP has called for, they said: "Tax cuts for middle and lower income. We tax you here on this side because your taxes go to the upper-income folks, those who earn \$80,000 and up"—\$80,000 taxable, which means they're earning \$90,000 to \$100,000. "Those people who are well off," we say, "they don't need the bucks." Ministers get a good tax hike. They don't need it. CEOs earning \$354,000, they don't need it. That's our position. If you're going to give it, give it to middle- and lower-income. That makes sense.

The other thing is the squeegee kids.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Stop the clock. The treasury bench should be slightly quieter during these speeches.

Mr Marchese: On the squeegee kids, we heard the Attorney General quoted as saying, "Someone in effect extorts money from you and out of fear you give them money." Extortion—the Attorney General. You guys are going a bit too far in this regard. I'm serious, you people are really not doing justice to this issue. In fact, you make so much fun of it in your extreme position that I feel bad,

I've got to tell you in all seriousness in the last few seconds that I've got.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Morley Kells (Etobicoke-Lakeshore): I finally rise before you today to report for the first time this session on the city of Toronto's bid to bring the 2008 Summer Olympic and Paralympic Games to our province.

The last time I spoke in the House on the Olympic bid was December 17, 1998, when my colleagues from both sides of the House agreed to set aside their partisan roles to pass unanimously Bill 77, An Act to endorse the proposed bid of the City of Toronto to host the XXIX Summer Olympic Games.

1740

There should be no doubt that the passing of Bill 77 has had an important impact on the development of the bid. The bid organizers truly understand that they must expand their concept of the games' presentation beyond Toronto's borders. It has now become somewhat of a truism held by all those involved in the bid that only through the active participation of the broadest spectrum of our communities will we be successful in winning the right to present this monumental endeavour to the world early in the new millennium.

I was reminded of this recently when I attended the 1999 World Rowing Championships in St Catharines. I promised the member for St Catharines I would mention that. St Catharines' capacity to effectively host a sporting event of this significance evidences the importance of drawing on the expertise and talents found outside of Toronto. The Henley rowing course is an outstanding facility which has for several decades been the site for hundreds of international rowing competitions. It should be noted that along with generous private donors, the municipal, provincial and federal governments invested several millions of dollars in the upgrading of the Henley course to accommodate the needs of the 1999 World Rowing Championships. The partnerships and investments developed in this regard are important examples of what we need to achieve if our Olympic goals are to be realized. By working together and through detailed planning, every Ontarian can benefit from our coordinated efforts.

The opportunities offered by bidding for and hosting the Olympic Games are economically attractive. In this regard, the throne speech recently pointed to the two or perhaps the most important goals behind the Toronto bid, the bid that can help re-establish Ontario as a leader in sports facilities, coaching programs and athletic performance. Over the next decade, our efforts are not limited to just the development of sport. The second goal is also to revitalize the Golden Horseshoe's waterfront areas so that Ontarians and visitors will enjoy all that it has to offer for years to come.

These are not simply components of a wish list, nor derived from overzealous thinking. On the contrary, we have the benefit of drawing on the experiences of three successful Olympic and Paralympic games that have

achieved similar goals and have indeed developed lasting legacies for their communities.

In 1992, Barcelona presented what is arguably the Olympic Games that have contributed most significantly to the growth, development and modernization of any host city. Even now, seven years after the games, the Olympic legacy is visible. Barcelona has reclaimed its waterfront and constructed modern housing on what was once abandoned industrial land. For decades, Barcelona's seafront and infrastructure had been neglected. Now, through coordinated and careful planning, the city utilized the opportunity presented by the Olympics to enunciate a clear plan for modernizing its transportation infrastructure, commercial port and telecommunications systems.

It should be remembered that the lessons from Barcelona can only be contemplated within the context of what the organizers were trying to achieve. The aim was to present the Olympic and Paralympic games that would fit into the city's revitalization program. Through pragmatic planning, organizers achieved their goals, and Barcelonians continue to enjoy the economic legacy of their efforts. Presently, Barcelona is the sixth most popular tourist city in Europe after the great capital cities. I attribute it to their Olympic success.

Four years later, Atlanta presented the centennial Olympics. For the first time ever, we learned that the private sector could be galvanized to finance and build the required venues and stadium without vast sums of public money. Amateur sport activities in Atlanta continue to benefit from the presentation of the 1996 Olympics. Athletes have modern facilities in which they can train and compete, and the community Olympic development program, as it's called down there, funds amateur athletes so that they have the means to compete at the elite level in future competitions around the world.

While Atlanta's Olympic Games contributed to the growth of amateur sport, the lessons we learned from these games are far more extensive. The value of looking back on these games and asking ourselves what can be done to improve our future presentations is possibly incalculable. Atlanta's experiences have shown us that detailed planning and sensitivity to the practical application of these plans will have an impact on the effective hosting of the games. One need only recall the transportation shortcomings that plagued the Atlanta games. By drawing on their mistakes, we can learn how to avoid such pitfalls. By building on the lessons of those who have gone before us, we can confidently move forward in the development of our own plans.

In one year's time, Sydney, Australia, will host the 2000 Olympics, and already we are witness to the incredible benefits that hosting the games offers for Sydney and the state of New South Wales. Organizers constructed the aquatic centre early, which now serves as a well-used training facility. Its value to the athletic well-being of that sport-crazed country is well established in advance of the actual Olympic competition.

The contribution to Sydney's evolution is not limited to its leadership and sports facilities, coaching programs and athletic performance; rather it is far more significant. For decades, an area in the centre of the city known as Homebush Bay was home to an abattoir, a dump, a munitions storage and testing area and other large-scale industrial activities. Needless to say, many parts of the area became badly polluted.

An environmentally damaged wasteland in the centre of any great metropolitan area is unthinkable. The bid and games organizers in Sydney were not satisfied to see this white elephant continue to exist in the heart of their state's largest city. What was needed was the coordinated efforts of government and the private sector to reclaim the area.

Their Olympic bid presented them with the opportunity to focus their efforts and achieve their goals. Now, the land at Homebush Bay has been remediated and is known for its park, athletic facilities for a host of sports and, of course, the big Olympic stadium. Today, and for years to come, Homebush Bay will be a place for the people of Sydney and tourists to visit and enjoy.

I believe they are ready and will present the most successful Olympics of all because of their commitment and their dedication to build the required facilities and to marshal the population in support of the games.

There is no reason why the city of Toronto, and indeed all of Ontario, cannot enjoy similar benefits from the presentation of the 2008 Olympics. The key will be how bid organizers, the private sector and governments and the people of our province use this opportunity to define how we want our city and region to develop over the long term. Ontario should and will provide leadership and support in these endeavours. Through strong initiatives, an effective plan can be put into place that will re-establish Ontario as a leader in Canada in sports facilities, coaching programs and athletic performance while revitalizing our waterfront areas so that all Ontarians and visitors to our great province can enjoy what has been left as a legacy.

But we must be realistic. We cannot simply pursue a wish list of projects without a view to the costs for taxpayers. The pursuit of the Olympics is a rare opportunity that must be seized. These two objectives are not mutually exclusive. That is why the Ontario Olympic Sports and Waterfront Development Agency was recently created. As chair of this new agency, the board and I will support the Toronto bid organization's efforts to bring the 2008 Summer Olympic and Paralympic Games to Ontario.

Essentially, the agency has two functions. First, it will help establish Ontario as number one in sport, and, secondly, it will continue the work initiated by David Crombie to ensure that Lake Ontario's waterfront gets the commitment to development that it badly needs.

Only by defining our goals as a province can we then tap into the potential of our waterfront and pursue the projects that will benefit all Ontarians for generations. The Olympic Games are simply the catalyst to achieve

these goals. That is why the agency and the commissioner's office are working closely with bid organizers to ensure that venue locations are in keeping with the new vision for the waterfront. The Olympics have caught our attention and our imaginations in that regard.

The vision for the region must be based on sound planning and the assistance of the private sector and the skilled professionals who know how to make things happen economically. Our collective future should be better because of our efforts to bring the games to Ontario. That is why the agency and the commissioner's office will ensure that Ontario taxpayers are protected throughout this endeavour.

Mr Speaker, as you know, the province of Ontario will be asked to guarantee the games. Only after we are satisfied that proper financial controls are in place will such an arrangement be contemplated.

1750

The benefits from compiling a winning Olympic bid are not limited to what they contribute to international sports competitions but also for what they offer for our future in terms of economic growth and investment in badly needed infrastructure programs.

Our primary goal is the creation of a world-class region that can be proud of its successes. Hosting the Olympic Games offers Ontarians an opportunity to focus their efforts on development projects that may otherwise not be achieved. We have a chance to finally develop a comprehensive plan that will allow for needed environmental cleanups plus the construction of much-needed housing and infrastructure upgrades.

The Olympics is the lens through which we can focus our resources and achieve our goals. You can be sure that the world will be watching to see what improvements will be made to our communities to best meet the demands of a huge influx of not only competitors but also the thousands of spectators who will journey to our province to witness the Olympic competitions. It is too early to guess at what changes will be made, but hopefully governments, citizens' groups, businesses, cultural organizations and the average Ontarian will be unanimous in support of what has to be built and upgraded.

Amateur sport will be left with renovated and new facilities that will develop sport and will become an enduring and valuable asset for our communities. Significantly, Ontario's cultural community will have an opportunity to showcase its many unique talents across the province.

The Olympic Games provide us all with an opportunity to not only pursue more concrete goals for development but also a chance to improve ourselves as individuals. There is no better way than through sport to achieve this, and the Olympic ideals of peace, honour and sportsmanship are principles that we should all strive for and uphold in our daily lives.

The pursuit and celebration of the Olympic Games is an opportunity for everyone to participate in and contribute to an event that seeks to bring peace and the pursuit of excellence in mind, body and spirit to every

corner of the world. With changes expected in the IOC structure, I anticipate these ideals will be strengthened. Reforms, once adopted, will result in our ultimate success because they will augment our capacity to win the games based on our traditions of forthrightness and honesty. For example, this weekend the IOC agreed to appoint 15 athletes to their committee and introduced an eight-year term of office and a re-election process for its IOC members. As you know if you read the newspapers on the weekend, there is more to come this December.

My role as Ontario Olympics Commissioner is to ensure that the talented people in our diverse communities mobilize the varied and rich resources in our province. I look forward to continue to work with all Ontarians as we proceed with this unique undertaking. To me, the goal is worthy. The winning of the bid is well within our ability and I believe we can organize and deliver the best Olympics of all time.

Before I close, I'd like to run down a little chronological order of events that are about to take place in the city of Toronto and indeed in the greater Toronto area. I'm not too sure what day, this week or possibly early next week—as you know, the mayor of Toronto has once again outlined a vision of his own for the city's waterfront. I believe he's calling a meeting together again to undertake that exercise but this time the Premier of Ontario and, it is my understanding, the Prime Minister of Canada will stand with the mayor to deal with the vision of Toronto's waterfront. The Olympics will only be one vital part of that exercise.

After that falls into place, after, as you may appreciate, much planning, there will be another announcement made by the Toronto bid group. They will be announced,

if you will, the dream Olympics sites, the venues and places where they feel these sites would best be placed. I may tell you in the House today that I'm not exactly aware of where they're all going, and it is not a function of my office to direct that. But I can tell you that we will be making considerable input to it after the announcement. We will not, as a representative of this House, stand idly by and, with all due respect to the organizers, let them dictate where the venues must go.

As you can appreciate, there will be a great deal of debate. I for one question the selection of the so-called eastern port lands as the focus for the games. I'm more interested, from my point of view, in land that's already owned by the public, whether by the city of Toronto or the province of Ontario, and I feel that the CNE and Ontario Place and, if you will, the convention centre, the trade centre and SkyDome are admirably suited to be used for the Olympic Games.

When that debate takes place, then there will be another period of time when a thorough costing will be done on the presentation of the games, again by the bid organizers. Only after that and considerable negotiation will I be recommending to the Premier and to the cabinet, and through them to this House, that the guarantee be undertaken.

I will continue to report to you as often as I can, and I appreciate the all-party support last December for what we're trying to do.

The Acting Speaker: It being 6, this House stands adjourned until 6:45 this evening.

The House adjourned at 1757.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

ERRATUM

No.	Page	Column	Line(s)	Should read:
6	194	1	20	Bassett is my direct predecessor. Ms Bassett brought a dignity to this

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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 Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Gary Carr
 Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers
 Clerk Assistant / Greffière adjointe: Deborah Deller
 Clerks at the Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman
 Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergeant d'armes: Dennis Clark

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Arnott, Ted (PC)	Waterloo-Wellington	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
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Bartolucci, Rick (L)	Sudbury	deputy opposition House leader / chef parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition
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Bisson, Gilles (ND)	Timmins-James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	
Bountrogianni, Marie (L)	Hamilton Mountain	
Boyer, Claudette (L)	Ottawa-Vanier	
Bradley, James J. (L)	St Catharines	
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Christopherson, David (ND)	Hamilton West / -Ouest	New Democratic Party House leader / chef parlementaire du Nouveau Parti démocratique
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Coburn, Brian (PC)	Carleton-Gloucester	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Colle, Mike (L)	Eglinton-Lawrence	
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Cordiano, Joseph (L)	York South-Weston / York-Sud-Weston	
Crozier, Bruce (L)	Essex	
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DeFaria, Carl (PC)	Mississauga East / -Est	
Di Cocco, Caroline (L)	Sarnia-Lambton	
Dombrowsky, Leona (L)	Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington	
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Kwinter, Monte (L)	York Centre / -Centre	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Glengarry-Prescott-Russell	
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Ramsay, David (L)	Timiskaming-Cochrane	
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These lists appear in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month. A list arranged by riding appears when space permits.

Ces listes figurent dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et du premier lundi de chaque mois. Par contre, une liste des circonscriptions paraît si l'espace est disponible.

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No. 7B

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of Ontario
First Session, 37th Parliament

Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario
Première session, 37^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Monday 1 November 1999

Lundi 1^{er} novembre 1999

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 1 November 1999

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 1^{er} novembre 1999

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

DÉBAT SUR LE DISCOURS DU TRÔNE

Resuming the adjourned debate on the amendment to the amendment to the motion for an address in reply to the speech of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor at the opening of the session.

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): I rise today to speak to the throne speech. I would ask for unanimous consent to split my time with the member for Sudbury.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Is it agreed? It is agreed.

Mrs Dombrowsky: I have lived in Tweed, Ontario, which is in the heart of Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington, for my entire life. I am a farmer's daughter, raised in the French settlement north of Tweed. My parents worked hard for all they have, and they raised their daughters to care about people and respect others, to work hard, to get a good education and to always be honest. It is within this hard-working rural family that I learned about the importance of democracy, the value of having a voice and the moral responsibility to stand up for those things that you believe to be true.

Anyone who has been a member of this House knows the significant impact that the role of MPP has on our families. I am fortunate to enter this role with the love and support of my husband, Helmut, and our four wonderful children. The sacrifices they have made already, and will continue to make in the future, to allow me to effectively represent the people of my riding, for that I am truly thankful.

I would also like to thank the many individuals from across my riding who worked so hard to help me be their voice. It was truly a team effort that brought me to Queen's Park to represent the people of Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington. I am humbled by their confidence, and I take very seriously my responsibility to be their voice. The residents of my riding want and deserve to be heard at Queen's Park.

Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington is a re-aligned riding that was previously served by three fine

representatives, Mr Harry Danford, Mr Bill Vankoughnet and Mr Gary Fox.

As I have travelled throughout my riding, many people have remarked that it is a very large one. Not only does Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington have one of the longest names, but it also covers an area of 12,330 square kilometres, stretching from Maynooth, the gateway to Algonquin Park in the north, to Amherst Island in the south. The riding is made up of rugged Canadian Shield, rich rolling farmland, pristine lakes and quaint towns and villages. We have over 90,000 residents, 26 municipalities and 5,000 kilometres of road.

Many travellers come to Ontario seeking experiences they cannot find at home. Areas like the Land O'Lakes tourist region in my riding are working hard to ensure that visitors to the area return home with memories that will last a lifetime: boating, camping, wilderness retreats, skiing or snowmobiling. If one is looking for a unique vacation, Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington is filled with wonderful opportunities, some of Ontario's finest provincial parks, the Rideau Canal, the Trans-Canada Trail and numerous community fairs and festivals awaiting travellers who venture east of Toronto.

The riding is also rich in heritage, as the home of the United Empire Loyalists, and many significant historical sites. Napanee, Bath and the Loyalist Parkway offer a veritable treasure trove of historic experiences. Throughout the riding there are numerous historical and heritage centres that actively record and promote the courage and work ethic that have formed the strong foundations of the rural communities in Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington. Their origins are from throughout Europe and the United States, and together they underpin the rich fabric of society in rural Ontario.

1850

Yet as wonderful as Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington is, over the past several months I've had the opportunity to hear from many real people across my riding. Groups and individuals have told me that this unique part of Ontario faces many significant challenges in the coming months.

The throne speech talked about real people and real families. However, I was most disappointed that the throne speech did not address the real issues of rural Ontario. The throne speech, as long as it was, was silent in addressing the myriad of issues that have come to me in recent weeks and months. Regularly, I have heard from parents of students with special needs who have experienced reductions in support services for their children. Local boards are bound to a funding formula that is

inflexible and inadequate in providing for the range of needs within the board. The funding formula, nobly intended to provide resources equitably for students, falls far short of that goal when providing for special-needs students.

The trauma of municipal amalgamation, with little if any support or direction from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, has placed significant burdens on many of the municipalities in my riding. Essential services such as police and ambulance have been forced upon these rural municipalities without regard for their ability to pay or to manage such important services in sparsely populated rural communities.

One municipality in my riding, Addington Highlands, is 71% crown land, and it has had Highway 41, a major eastern Ontario artery, downloaded. The municipality would indicate that it would be able to maintain the highway; however, the municipality does not have the resources to upgrade the highway.

The municipality of Central Frontenac is in a similar situation, as Highway 509 and Highway 38 have been downloaded. These roads are in pitiable condition and require major repair and construction. The throne speech said nothing about government plans to assist and support municipalities that do not have sufficient local resources to address the burdens that have been downloaded to them.

Another transportation issue in my riding is the lack of adequate service for the ferry users of Amherst Island. Ferry users are forced to use an older ferry that is not large enough to meet the local need, and many users question its safety. The throne speech was silent in addressing the transportation needs on Ontario's aqueous routes.

Health issues throughout Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington are numerous. However, the issue of greatest concern relates to letters that local hospitals have received. They have been instructed that they must end their fiscal year in a balanced position in spite of situations that may have been inherited from predecessor governing bodies. This expectation will undoubtedly have a negative impact on the operations and service delivery in these hospitals.

My office is repeatedly made aware of the desperate need for increased support in the area of home care. When people are being discharged from hospital sicker and quicker, there is even greater need for home care services to assist people in their recuperation. Many people, usually seniors, who would like to be able to stay in their own homes, and who would be able to do so with only a little help, are being forced to consider placement in already overtaxed long-term-care facilities because they are being denied a few hours a week of home care for personal care and/or homemaking. However, the throne speech was silent on these issues that are very important to the real people in my riding.

I promise the people of Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington that I will be their voice at Queen's Park. I know for whom I work, and I am both humbled and inspired by their confidence. My work will bring me to

Toronto. However, my heart is and always will be firmly rooted in my riding.

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): I'd like to thank my colleague for splitting her time with me.

As this is my first speech in the House, I would like to take the opportunity to thank the people of the expanded Sudbury riding for re-electing me and sending me back to the Ontario Legislature to fight for what they feel to be very important and to fight for the directions they feel are necessary not only for the people of Sudbury but for the people of Ontario.

I'd like to congratulate as well all members on both sides of the House who have either been re-elected or elected for the first time. It is a wonderful experience. It's an honour to be a member of this particular House, and I look forward to the interchange which will take place among the members of all three parties over the course of the next several years.

I look forward as well to working with the government in establishing meaningful legislation that wasn't addressed in the speech from the throne.

Just a few of the topics that I believe to be very important include meaningful legislation with regard to the protection of children who are sexually abused or exploited through prostitution. I know the Solicitor General will ensure that this type of legislation is at least talked about over on the government side, because that problem is real. It's not only real in my city or in our area of Ontario; it's real all across Ontario and in fact across Canada. It has to be dealt with not only municipally, not only provincially, not only federally, but internationally as well.

I also look forward to working with the Solicitor General to ensure that meaningful legislation is passed with regard to those people who decide they are going to outrun the police. I look forward to quick passage of that type of legislation which will ensure that the memory of Sergeant Rick McDonald from Sudbury, who was killed by a van fleeing the police, will be a lasting memory for those of us who believe it is important to pass meaningful provincial legislation which will discourage that. I believe his wife, Sergeant Corinne Fewster McDonald, has placed a trust in our Solicitor General. She has also placed a trust in me as her representative to ensure that this legislation reaches fruition quickly. I wish it had been in the speech from the throne, but I know that the Solicitor General, who has given his word to our police force and to Sergeant Corinne Fewster McDonald, will ensure that the legislation comes to the House quickly and that we will debate it in a very honest, open and frank way, and hopefully pass the legislation that is necessary.

We have immediate problems, as you know, in northern Ontario and in my riding of Sudbury that I want to deal with for the next few moments. Certainly one that is of major concern to me is the doctor shortage that is happening in the region of Sudbury at this point in time. We know it's not a problem unique to Sudbury or to northern Ontario but is a problem across Ontario. In Sudbury, though, the problem is critical. We are now

short 35 specialists. They cover all the fields of specialty, and people are dying because they aren't able to be seen by the specialists who can treat them and maybe save their lives.

We have a solution in Sudbury and we have presented it to the government. The government has acted only in part on it. I suggest to the government that I am willing to work with this government and with this health minister to ensure that the program in the north, by the north and for the north is implemented fully. But in order to do that, the government is going to have to make a substantial commitment of dollars to the program.

Everyone on both sides of the House realizes and understands that there is a solution to the shortage of doctors in northern Ontario. This document was put together by the health care professionals in northern Ontario. We are willing to implement it in northern Ontario. They are willing to work to ensure that there is a continuum of services provided by specialists and by family doctors, but the reality is that the program will only be successful if it is funded, and it has to be funded by the province because it is a provincial initiative.

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The people at the Northern Academic Health Sciences Network are very willing to work with this government. They have shown in the past that they are open to the government's suggestions for altering the program, but the reality is, in all fairness to the program and with all due respect to the government, that their suggestions aren't nearly as good as what's there at this point in time. That has been proven time and time again. The health minister has stood in the last Parliament and committed some monies to it, saying that it was an excellent program. The reality is it cannot be implemented unless you fund the program completely. I look forward to that announcement being made by this government at some point in time, and I hope that is immediate, because we need those doctors in Sudbury and in northern Ontario now.

Second, I'm very concerned about the northern health travel grant. I've stood in this House on numerous occasions in the 36th Parliament and argued for more money. The reality is that it is necessary for this government to ensure that northerners are treated fairly. All that northerners want is a level playing field, a playing field that is equal to the playing field provided for patients in southern Ontario. I will be continuing to go back to the northern health travel grant until, in the wisdom of this government, they see fit to fund it accordingly.

I am very concerned about hospital restructuring in the regional municipality of Sudbury and in northeastern Ontario. It is virtually impossible for the people of the Sudbury region to come up with \$20 million-plus in order to build the new facility that your restructuring exercise said was necessary in Sudbury. It is impossible for us to cut our services any more. When you see that we're running deficits of \$7.2 million one year, \$8 million this year, the reason that's happening is you have underfunded the system in years past. You have withdrawn too much money from the system, and it is now

crucial that you understand, that you pause, look and fund.

I welcome, and I'm sure the hospital administration in Sudbury would welcome, the Provincial Auditor's going in and studying the books in the Sudbury Regional Hospital. You will find that it isn't the fault of the people who are running the hospital; it isn't the fault of the people who are providing the services. It is the lack of understanding that this government has with regard to the extra burden and extra costs attached to the delivery of health services in northern Ontario.

I look forward to working with the government and I look forward to the government committing early, hopefully next week. When your health minister meets next week with all those hospitals that are running deficits, I hope that she will understand, she will come to her senses, and she will realize that delivering services in northern Ontario is very unique and very costly.

I look forward to working with the Minister of Health and with the Minister of Labour with regard to the workplace carcinoma committee. It is unacceptable that 9% of the workforce goes to work and contracts a deadly form of cancer that will, either in the short term or long term, kill them. It is more inexcusable when we have the means to ensure that the number is reduced substantially.

The workplace carcinoma committee is not a partisan matter. The workplace carcinoma committee should be a committee established with all-party consent to ensure that working men and women in this province can go to work and feel confident enough in knowing that their workplace will not kill them.

In conclusion, I would like to thank those people who worked on my campaign. We had 1,340 volunteers. I don't have the time in 41 seconds to mention all of them, but I do want them to know that they are equally important in my estimation, and over the course of the next four years I will hopefully meet the goals and certainly the agenda that they have asked me to implement at Queen's Park on their behalf.

Finally, one should understand that in democracy there is debate, and that debate must not only include the government members but must be respected by the opposition members and the government members for each other.

The Deputy Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Carl DeFaria (Mississauga East): It's a pleasure to rise tonight to join in the debate. I'd like to congratulate the member for Hastings-Frontenac on her maiden speech, and the member for Sudbury.

We are continuing to discuss the throne speech and the amendments that have been introduced. Our government made it very clear that there are still a lot of changes that need to be done and that we were elected to continue to fix government. That's what we intend to do, follow up on our Blueprint and the platform that was presented during the election.

The job of building a stronger and more prosperous province continues. The spirit of the Common Sense Revolution continues to guide us, and our agenda is a

very busy agenda. We need to continue the job-creating tax cuts and we have indicated that we'll be continuing to do that, and introduce a further 20% reduction in personal income taxes and a 20% reduction in the provincial portion of residential property taxes. We have introduced the taxpayer protection and balanced budget legislation, and that was long overdue. The people of Ontario have said very clearly during the election that they wanted us to do that, and that is the first piece of legislation we want to introduce. I am pleased to report to the House that it has been done.

We also indicated that we want to proceed with the declaration of taxpayers' rights and we'll be doing that.

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): I think it's very important that everyone in this House put their earphones on at the present time. I was just watching the television at 7 o'clock, and there's a major announcement that would break up the Collège d'Alfred in my riding. This government has been saying that they will cut personal taxes, but they never say what is going to follow.

J'aimerais apporter à votre attention la nouvelle qu'on vient de nous présenter à la télévision de TFO. On vient de nous annoncer des coupures d'au-delà de 1,5 \$ million au Collège d'Alfred. Cela est la subvention que nous recevions au Collège d'Alfred. Cela veut dire que c'est une recommandation qui vient du comité ministériel qui va être discutée à la prochaine réunion du cabinet.

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Je crois que c'est une tape en plein visage pour les francophones de l'est ontarien et de toute la province. Je dis bien une tape en plein visage parce que ce gouvernement-là ne comprend pas l'importance de la langue française et des services en français ici même en Ontario. Nous avons au-delà de 52 pays sur ce globe qui parlent français où le français est leur première langue officielle. Aujourd'hui, avec ces coupures gouvernementales de 1,5 \$ million, nous allons être obligés de fermer le Collège d'Alfred. Est-ce que c'est un autre Montfort ? Je crois que c'est la suite avec le gouvernement Harris qui ne croit simplement pas aux services aux francophones, qui sont au-delà de 500 000 dans cette province.

Je crois que c'est une honte pour ce gouvernement d'agir de cette façon et j'espère que le conseil du cabinet va regarder la recommandation et s'assurer que le Collège d'Alfred demeure ouvert pour donner les services à tous ces étudiants qui étudient en agroalimentaire dans notre comté.

The Deputy Speaker: Comments or questions?

M. Gilles Bisson (Timmins-Baie James) : Encore une fois on voit dans la communauté francophone un gouvernement qui ose attaquer la communauté d'une manière qui touche à la souche de ce que c'est que d'être francophone. On a vu dernièrement dans le premier parlement du gouvernement conservateur attaqué après attaque quand ça vient aux services à la communauté francophone. On a vu ce qui est arrivé à l'hôpital Montfort, on l'a vécu. On a vu ce qui est arrivé avec la réduction des services du gouvernement provincial

envers la clientèle francophone. On l'a vu, on l'a vécu. On voit aujourd'hui le gouvernement qui veut attaquer encore une autre institution provinciale, une autre institution francophone, le Collège d'Alfred.

À quel point est-ce que ça va s'arrêter ? À quel point est-ce que le gouvernement va finalement comprendre que la communauté francophone a besoin d'avoir ces services pour être capable d'épanouir sa volonté comme communauté francophone envers sa propre communauté ? On ne peut pas toujours envoyer nos enfants, jour après jour, aux institutions anglaises. On a été à travers de ces situations-là dans le passé. C'est pour ces raisons que les gouvernements d'avant ont mis en place ces institutions pour s'assurer que nous, les francophones, avons à nos institutions qui sont là pour desservir la communauté francophone. On apprend encore que le gouvernement va traiter la question quelque temps cette semaine ou la semaine prochaine faisant faire avec le Collège d'Alfred. Le ministère d'Agriculture veut retirer 1,5 \$ million de cette institution. Si l'approbation est donnée par le ministre, M. Hodgson, et par le premier ministre, M. Harris, ça veut dire la fin de cette institution.

Monsieur le Président et les députés de l'assemblée, et spécialement sur le bord conservateur, allez-vous comprendre une fois pour toutes que c'est assez ? On vous dit d'arrêter pour une fois et réfléchir à ce que vous êtes en train de faire à la communauté francophone et à la communauté agricole du nord-est et de l'est en Ontario. Ça a besoin d'arrêter.

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland) : I was interested in listening to the presentation made by the newly elected member from Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington, my regional home area, and also the member from Sudbury.

I'd like to bring to the attention of the first member who spoke who was rather critical of some of the CCAC activities and getting some of the dollars out there. I think she should recall some of the things that have happened in previous years. When the Liberals were in government back in the late 1980s, they were the ones who started to close hospital beds. I'm not saying that was necessarily wrong at the time, because there was a change in medicine. But they did nothing about those closed rooms other than just let them sit there. Then the NDP, who screamed about the closing of beds and rooms, came along and continued to close just as many beds as the Liberals did and did nothing about the expensive hospitals sitting there.

This government finally did something. We took the bull by the horns and we looked at all these beds that were closed, equal to about 30 medium-sized hospitals. The HSRC came in, a very painful activity. In my area the Port Hope hospital was closed and that was not an easy thing to handle. But something had to be done about the number of beds, and what I'm coming around to, the member from Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington, is the fact that we've reinvested those dollars back into the system and now the system has some money for things like CCACs and to look after people at home.

We've also come out with longer hospital stays for new moms. It's now up to at least 60 hours that they're able to stay in hospital. As a matter of fact, we're committed to getting more physicians into our underserviced areas by paying their tuition, provided that they will go and serve for some five years in the underserviced areas.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington has two minutes to respond.

Mrs Dombrowsky: I'm very happy to respond to some of the statements made by the member for Northumberland with regard to having me go back in history and think about what happened in the former Liberal government. I reflect with great pride on the record of that government.

More to the point about what this government has done: The issues that I raised in my comments on the throne speech in the area of health care specifically related to the fact that hospitals in my riding have been given letters that direct them to end the year in a balanced position in spite of the fact that they have inherited some significant deficits over which they've had no control. What it will require is a very serious consideration of the needed services that are provided now, with a view to reducing or modifying those services. So I find hard to understand that the member opposite would suggest this is a better way of providing health care within the community.

Also, with regard to the role of CCACs, I certainly in no way commented negatively on the role. I believe they're doing their very best with the limited resources they have. I have had the opportunity to meet with both members of the board of directors of the CCAC and members of the administration, who very clearly indicate they are not provided with adequate resources to meet the caseloads they have. There are people in my riding who are not getting the home care services they need and deserve. They are going home from hospital sicker, they are not getting the hours of home care they should have, and in some cases they're even returning to the hospital. So if you want to talk about CCACs and the role they have, I'm very happy to do it. I'm very happy to point out to you that they need more financial assistance in order to do their job.

The Deputy Speaker: I want to bring to the attention of the House a former member from Kitchener-Wilmot, Gary Leadston, in the members' gallery.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Further debate?

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): Mr Speaker, I would like to request unanimous consent to share the time I have remaining after my speech with my friend the member for Northumberland.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it agreed? It is agreed.

Mr Arnott: I am honoured and privileged to join in this response to the speech from the throne, speaking on behalf of the people of my new constituency of Waterloo-Wellington.

In Ontario's restructured Legislature, which now has 103 seats and 27 fewer MPPs, in some ways I consider this to be my maiden speech for the new riding of Waterloo-Wellington. While I continue to serve a large portion of Wellington county, I now have the added privilege of serving constituents in Waterloo region, including a part of the city of Kitchener. I am very pleased and delighted that my former colleague Gary Leadston is here in the gallery today, because Gary represented Kitchener-Wilmot, as you indicated, Mr Speaker, very ably over the four-year term he spent here, and of course my new riding includes much of Gary's old riding.

In the 20 months preceding the election, and since June 3, I have met many people from Waterloo region, from Wellesley, Wilmot and Woolwich townships and those from the southwestern part of the city of Kitchener whom I now represent. I think it's important to say to my constituents, both new and those I have represented since 1990, that I believe it is my first job to represent their needs and concerns to their provincial government.

I think it was Winston Churchill who said that he who represents his constituents first represents his government best. I agree with that statement. The themes of Ontario's throne speech closely mirror that sentiment: "Government exists to serve people—not the other way around."

The people of Ontario, and my constituents, want to enter a new millennium that provides every single Ontarian with boundless opportunities in a province that is destined to have a better future. The throne speech is Ontario's commitment to how we will serve those aspirations. More jobs that are more secure and better paying, better access to health care, higher quality education and the greatest possible access to healthy beginnings for children is where we see Ontario in the future. Our continued commitment to strong leadership and a strong economy is how we will get there.

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Our steadfast commitment to greater opportunities for all Ontarians is perhaps most poignantly represented in the throne speech by its reference to Jerry Weber, a young man from Kitchener. You'll recall that in dealing with the combined pressures of a struggling new business and an illness in his family, Jerry had no option but to seek social assistance.

Under our new system of work for welfare, where welfare has been transformed from mere cheque distribution into a system that helps people find work, Jerry is now back on his feet. He now runs a successful small business called Northern Barn Custom Furniture in Baden in my riding of Waterloo-Wellington.

I want to thank the Premier for hosting the Webers recently by personally providing Jerry and his wife with seats for the throne speech—they were sitting right down here. That was a wonderful gesture, and a fair one in terms of a seat-for-seat swap, considering that the Premier himself recently received a chair that was hand-crafted by Jerry to indicate his personal appreciation for Ontario's new welfare system.

I was glad that Waterloo-Wellington had two references in the recent throne speech. The beautiful Grand River watershed is part of our heritage in Waterloo-Wellington, the attraction that drew waves of immigrants to settle in our area in the 19th century. The Grand River Conservation Authority was mentioned in the throne speech for its plan to make Ontario better in the new millennium.

As part of the government's Ontario 2000 program, the Conservation Authority will distribute 50,000 white pine seedlings so that school children will have an opportunity to plant Ontario's official tree. I can't think of a better way for our kids in the watershed school boards to learn about protecting our environment and our future than by doing something about it. It's a lesson we can all fully appreciate through generations to come.

By the time they see those trees reaching maturity, they will know an Ontario that is more prosperous and healthy in every way because its leaders had a vision for its betterment.

We have made the structural changes that have laid the foundation upon which we are building a better future. And much remains to be done. Ninety-nine tax cuts, less red tape for small business, a balanced budget plan and a commitment to start paying down the debt are among the measures we are enacting to create the economic climate that will in turn create another 825,000 new jobs.

As parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade, it is my role to work with my friend the minister, and David Lindsay, president and CEO of the Ontario Jobs and Investment Board, towards our government's goal of making Ontario the best place to invest and create new jobs.

Most recently, we did this in our salute to small business, and I was pleased to join the minister for a day in the Guelph and Waterloo area. We held an Ontario Trade Days forum in Guelph, and I was pleased to be at that, and launched the 1999 Ontario Global Traders Awards for outstanding achievement in exporting.

Along with the member for Guelph-Wellington, we visited ABS Friction in Guelph, and later joined the Health Minister and MPP for Kitchener-Waterloo at Northern Digital in Waterloo. Both companies are top-performing, small- to medium-sized exporters, and both are 1998 Global Traders Award winners.

Small business accounts for 80% of over half a million net new jobs that have been created in Ontario since 1995, since we first took government. We salute the men and women who take great risks following their dreams, and who work their hearts out to create or run small businesses. They are the number one job creators and the innovators whose new ideas and business practices lead the way to our future and prosperity.

That is why this government helps small business to grow. Along with tax cuts and reduced red tape, the ministry has programs that work in partnership to develop business in Ontario. We have business self-help offices and enterprise centres that form partnerships with

the business community and municipalities to foster small business beginnings, expansion and ultimately job creation.

Recently I had the pleasure of joining the member for Oakville, the newly elected Speaker of this Legislature, and local partners to launch the enterprise centre for Halton region. In Halton, and in every business community I have visited or met as we've expanded this program, I have found strong support for this concept. So I welcome all members of this Legislature to review the material recently sent to them by the Minister of Economic Development and Trade requesting their input on obtaining wider support to extend this service to more regions, including the north of the province.

Our programs help create jobs in growth areas, or what we might call the jobs of the future. Sometimes, future job creation depends entirely on the skills and training we provide today. Through our strategic skills initiative, we have formed funding partnerships at Conestoga College in Kitchener and Confederation College in Thunder Bay to provide training for tomorrow's jobs. I've heard time and time again from business people in recent months that they would expand and create the new jobs we continue to need if only they had the skilled people available to fill these jobs. Our multi-year, \$100-million commitment through the strategic skills initiative is providing workers and employers with the skills they need to prosper.

The Ontario government realizes that strong training and motivated people are keys to future prosperity. Last month I had an opportunity to find out how much future entrepreneurs have to offer when I attended the Royal Bank Shad entrepreneurship cup on behalf of the Premier at the Ontario Science Centre.

As you may be aware, Mr Speaker, Shad Valley is an organization based in Waterloo whose core mission is to develop the scientific and technological capabilities of senior high school students and integrate these abilities with an advanced entrepreneurial spirit. The young people I met were the highest of high achievers. In fact, Shad Valley has had 11 Rhodes scholars among their alumni so far—quite an achievement.

As I told them, they embody the principles of A Road map to Prosperity, which is the province's vision for economic growth and a higher quality of life. Specifically, this program is in step with fostering entrepreneurship and innovation for our youth and throughout the training system. Every young person we train and every business we help to grow creates a stronger economy that supports a higher quality of life. That stronger economy has enabled us to increase the health care budget to a record high of over \$18.9 billion this year and commit to a further increase in health spending of 20% over the next five years.

The quality of life improvements of health care expansion are well on their way in hospitals that serve Waterloo-Wellington. Recently, I joined the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to launch a new childbirth and children's centre at the Grand River Hospital in Kitchener.

As part of our plan to improve access to health care for children and mothers, the province is investing over \$7 million to build the new centre, which will go a long way towards reaching our goal of providing better beginnings for mothers, children and families. It carries through on our 60-hour guaranteed stay for new moms, and our Healthy Babies, Healthy Children program, which supports parents' efforts to nurture healthy emotional and physical child development right from the start.

I'm pleased to report that since the Legislature passed my resolution highlighting the Healthy Babies, Healthy Children program, the province is increasing the program's funding nearly sevenfold, from its original annual budget of \$10 million to \$67 million by the year 2000-01.

Waterloo-Wellington will also have access to some of the world's best cancer treatment when the new cancer centre opens at the Grand River Hospital. Waterloo-Wellington heart patients will soon receive more of the treatments they need closer to home at St Mary's hospital in Kitchener, which will soon house two cardiac laboratories. The first lab is expected to be up and running by next summer, and I understand they will perform important, if not crucial, procedures such as angioplasty, the treatment where small, inflatable balloons are used to enlarge a narrowed blood vessel, improving the circulation of blood through a person's heart.

These and many other accomplishments demonstrate that this government represents the views of the people who put us here and that we are working to ensure a better quality of life for all Ontarians.

In Waterloo-Wellington we expect government to be frugal and to live within its means. We want government to adequately fund important services like health care, education and protection for our environment and our communities. We insist, rightly, that government manage its affairs honestly and competently. And that is what we will endeavour to do in this 37th Parliament of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Northumberland.

Mr Galt: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, and also thanks to the member for Waterloo-Wellington for sharing his time. This, of course, is my first opportunity to speak in the House in the 37th Parliament, and I certainly welcome back all the incumbents and also welcome the newcomers, and of course condolences to those who were not successful.

Indeed, what a privilege it is to be able to serve your constituents—in most of our cases, some hundred thousand people whom we're able to represent. There was a slight modification in my riding this time around. I did not lose any of the county of Northumberland but picked up the Trenton ward in Quinte west. I'm certainly very grateful to be able to serve and have this opportunity and also to thank the volunteers who worked so hard to ensure success in our riding. They certainly believed in what our party was doing. I was once asked how many were involved and I quickly estimated, "Oh, at least 200

or so." But thinking afterwards, hundreds and hundreds of people were involved in some way, answering phones or putting up signs, and that's true of all parties. I have the greatest respect for those who work for a party, preferably ours, but at least if they're working for a party they have some belief in the democratic process.

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Even after some four years of serving here, it's still a thrill to come in here and take part in the debate. We live in an era when it seems so important to put politicians down, whether it's in the press or whatever, but I personally think there is absolutely no higher calling than to have your fellow people—fellow men, fellow women—elect you and to have a majority ask you to come and serve here at Queen's Park.

The songwriter Bob Dylan once wrote, "Those who are not busy being born are busy dying." I think every day that I spend here in the Legislature is just a little like being born. There are always new ideas and new activities. There are always new discoveries, new challenges and new twists. I certainly look forward to this term and debating here in the House.

The press referred to the federal throne speech as the drone speech. In that speech, as the press reported, they said nothing, and it was filled with empty promises. But not so the speech that we had from the throne here in Ontario. That speech had meat. It had all kinds of details. It reaffirmed the platform that we campaigned on back in May 1999. It was about full steam ahead in Ontario, about building a stronger and a more prosperous province. That's what's been going on for the last four years, and it's going to continue for the next four years.

Some of the highlights that I particularly liked to see in the throne speech related to job-creating tax cuts, which will include another 20% cut in the income tax, just what it did in the first term. Here we are at 571,000 net new jobs, right on track to the five-year point of having 725,000 net new jobs as we promised back in May 1995.

We'll be bringing in the taxpayers' bill of rights and balanced budget legislation. There's going to be a businesslike approach to running government, one like we never saw in that lost decade from 1985 to 1995. Even the opposition parties are agreeing with our ideas on a sex offender registry that is needed.

We'll also be cracking down with zero tolerance on welfare fraud and aggressive panhandling. It's certainly time that we took welfare fraud very seriously.

As we look at agricultural issues, it was highlighted in the throne speech that agriculture in Ontario contributes some \$25 billion to the economy of this province. It also employs some 640,000 people. In Northumberland, it's the second-largest industry. It's good to see that we're going to follow through and update the food safety standards and increase inspection programs. We will also be working with farmers to improve rural water quality.

But I think what's really important in that throne speech is that we're going to do our very best, at least, to ensure that there is a fair share coming from the federal

government to assist with the safety nets in this province. Last year, the province of Ontario produced 23% of the agricultural production across Canada, but how much did they assist us with the safety net programs when farmers were in trouble? A measly 16%, when we produced 23%. I think it's time that the federal Minister of Agriculture paid attention to what's happening in his province and looked after his farmers in Ontario.

Health care has been mentioned several times in this House. We are quite concerned in Northumberland, with an aging and growing population, increasing pressures on health care. I'm thrilled that two of the five new hospitals to be built in Ontario in this term will be in my riding, one in Quinte West, in the Trenton ward, the Trenton Memorial Hospital. The steel is in the air and the roof is going over it as I speak this evening. In the west part of Northumberland there is also a commitment for a hospital with 70-30 funding, which certainly was never heard of when the opposition was in government.

We're also addressing the MD shortage, something that is very crucial in the Campbellford-Seymour area. One of the ways of addressing that, of course, is paying for their tuition, provided they go to underserviced areas once they graduate.

We're also building on the hiring of some 12,000 nurses, which we were committed to earlier, by increasing the funding for nurse practitioners, and also for the creation of a chief nursing officer in all Ontario hospitals. These are indeed very wise moves in giving real importance to the nursing profession here in the province.

It was also good to see in the throne speech the thrust towards tourism and promoting tourism. Certainly it's a \$60-million business in Northumberland. There's absolutely nothing more picturesque than the rolling hills of Northumberland, with Rice Lake in the north, Lake Ontario in the south, the Trent River system on the east and the Ganaraska on the west.

If there was anything in the throne speech that was the overall message, it had to do with economic stimulation, the cutting of taxes, the cutting of red tape and job creation. The job that we started out with four years ago has been tremendously successful. We're going to stay on track with that success and ensure that there are 725,000 net new jobs here by June 2000, and we'll keep right on creating those jobs.

We've reaffirmed our commitment as a government. We've reaffirmed that we will be attracting investment, that we'll be cutting taxes and we'll be making Ontario competitive. That's why some businesses are leaving this country. It's because we're just not competitive enough. There isn't a balanced playing field between labour and management. That playing field must be levelled. We must be competitive or we're going to see more industry leave. With this government, I can assure you that Ontario will be competitive well into the next millennium.

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): To the honourable members from Northumberland and Waterloo-Wellington: When we talk about economic stimulation, I wonder if they understand that for the first

time—it's unprecedented—we have a booming economy that isn't translating down to needs for people, isn't translating into work for people.

We have in our own community a booming economy, supposedly, yet we have an ophthalmologist who is shutting his doors because this government is changing the rules, and as it changes the rules, it doesn't consider how it affects people.

The economy is stimulated, yes. We have an economic boom, but it isn't translating into the health care system. Hospitals are being told we've got an economic boom, but we still have to continue cutting beds because the deficits have to be cut. I have to say that hospitals are not in the business of making money. They're not in the business of being able to provide monies to pay off their debts that they've incurred over the last number of years.

Again, government has a role, and that role is not just to look at the bottom line; it's to meet the needs of people. The balance that is needed is that you have to have fiscal responsibility—we know that—but you can't do it at the high price that it's costing this province when it comes to meeting the needs of people. You can't ignore the elderly, you can't ignore the disabled. You can't ignore the realities of the consequences all of these restraints are causing people. The struggles and the pain cannot be ignored. Government is there to give an even playing field.

Mr Bisson: I have a couple of comments on the comments made by the member for Northumberland. He talks about the economy doing really well and takes great pleasure in trying to take credit on the part of his government for what's happening in the economy. All of us understand, all of us know, that the reality is that the Ontario economy is doing well, by and large, because of what is happening in the US. For this government to take the position that the whole of the economic boom that supposedly we're seeing in southern Ontario is as a result of the Harris government is really a stretch. It would be akin to saying a tax cut in Ontario stimulates the US economy. Give your head a shake. You know that ain't the case.

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Then, to top it all off, the Premier has the nerve to go to Sudbury on Friday and say: "The economy is doing well. Since I have come to power, the economy in northern Ontario has done better than it ever has before." How do you explain the fact that unemployment has gone up since 1995 in northern Ontario, since the time that Mike Harris has taken power? Why? Because this government has turned its back on its responsibility to northern economic development, something that every government in the past—yes, including the Bill Davis government of the previous Tories—had done before. This government doesn't believe in intervention on the part of the province in assisting and being a partner at the table. Rather, it's a laissez-faire attitude. Let the big corporate elite decide what's going to happen. There are some positive sides to the southern Ontario economy, but none for us.

The other thing I really take exception to is he goes on at great lengths to talk about how: "Second term around, we're going after them welfare cheats. Boy, we've gotta kick 'em again." You know, everybody wants to make sure that somebody who's getting welfare is justly deserving. I wouldn't argue for a second that we shouldn't try to make sure it's accountable, but I think it's something taking—I can't say the unparliamentary word—

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: It's a double standard, I guess I can say. The same caucus condones a tax evader who has been convicted in its caucus, and then they go after welfare cheats. I think it's hypocritical.

The Deputy Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It's my pleasure to respond to the comments made by the member for Waterloo-Wellington and the member for Northumberland. Both of them tried to summarize the platform which the people of Ontario voted for on June 3. Clearly, as we formed the government, the people have spoken.

To summarize a couple of points, even during the May-June activities that we were all involved in, getting elected, we had to clearly demonstrate to the people of Ontario that we were committed to doing what we promised. It does take focused and very strong leadership to do what you say. Clearly, the opposition just is not up to the job. It's that simple. I've heard it said by some that it has weak and vacillating leadership. I'm proud that we've recognized the NDP with third party status. It shows our inclusiveness and respect. They really did offer a clear alternative. The clear alternative was that they weren't going to try to balance the budget or cut spending. We know what they are about.

If I look in some detail at the Liberal platform, it gives you a good insight into what they wouldn't have done. In fact, it was called the 20/20 Plan. The old saying is that 20/20 is hindsight. True, that's exactly what it was. They looked at what we did, and then with respect to health care—in the few minutes remaining—they were implementing a health audit. The reason for the health audit was to suggest perhaps that there were some inappropriate spending areas in the Ministry of Health, which is an appropriate approach. This government is allocating resources, putting patients first.

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): I want to compliment the members for Waterloo-Wellington and Northumberland for speaking on behalf of their government. I only wish that when we allow you to brag about what you feel you've done well, you would also give credit where credit is due. There was a lot of boo-hooing when it was said, "What about credit to the federal government and the fact that it has balanced its books?"

Interjections.

Mr Crozier: And there's more boo-hooing. I'll tell you what. I'll give you folks over there all the credit.

Interjection.

Mr Crozier: The member from Durham harps away and says, "The voters spoke." You know, the voters only gave you 40%; 60% didn't like what you had to offer.

We've got an electoral system in this province that's first past the post. That's what we have to deal with. You won the highest number of seats in first past the post. But don't ever say that the voters of Ontario gave you all this mandate, when 60% of them didn't.

Let's give you credit for everything good that has happened. Tell me why, last Thursday night, I listened to parents with tears in their eyes because there isn't enough special education funding for their kids. If you have taken credit for the good things, will you take responsibility for that? No. Do I hear anybody over there—put up your hand if you'll take responsibility for cheating special education kids' needs in Ontario.

Interjections.

All I hear is a bit of nattering. You're quite willing to take all the credit, but you won't stand up and take the blame for some of the things that aren't being done right in this province.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Northumberland has two minutes to respond.

Mr Galt: Brilliant comments from the member for Durham, absolutely excellent observation on his part. It's unfortunate the members for Sarnia-Lambton and Timmins-James Bay didn't see it quite the same way.

I'd like to zero in on some of the comments by the member for Essex and give credit where credit is due, and I think maybe I can in the next few minutes. Here is a party that won't go and lobby with their first cousins or brothers and sisters and do anything about the over \$3 billion in cuts to health care. They started with 50% of funding for health care; they have cut it to 7.6%. I would think, when they're dancing cheek to cheek, that the provincial Liberals might lobby a little with the federal Liberals and get a little assistance for Ontario.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Essex, come to order.

Mr Galt: Maybe they could do something about employment insurance premiums. They're ridiculously high, cutting jobs in this province, with \$21 billion in the bank. Will they do anything? No, they won't do anything.

Then they talk about our lacking a majority in this House. What about their cousins in Ottawa, who got 38% of the vote? This is the first government in history that, with two majorities in a row, actually increased their percentage. That's what happened in Ontario. If we could just get the provincial Liberals to work with their federal cousins, I think Ontario would be a lot better.

It's interesting to note that 100 of the 103 federal members from Ontario are Liberal. But are they doing anything for the province? No, and I think that's pretty unfortunate, but what else would you expect from a Liberal?

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope you have that out of your system. It may have been something you ate. I'd like to see you in here for the rest of the evening, and you won't be if you keep on.

I'd like now to recognize the member for Ottawa-Vanier.

Mrs Claudette Boyer (Ottawa-Vanier): I ask for unanimous consent to split time with the member for Hamilton East.

The Deputy Speaker: Agreed? It is agreed.

Mrs Boyer: It is with pride that I rise in this Legislative Assembly to address you and my fellow members as the elected representative for Ottawa-Vanier.

Mon élection à Queen's Park est pour moi un sommet, et j'accepte ce défi avec confiance et détermination.

My first words here as a representative of the people of Ottawa-Vanier are to pay tribute to the former outstanding member, whom I have the honour to succeed. Bernard Grandmaître was a dedicated and public spirited legislator from my area for many years. He arrived at Queen's Park with a solid record of municipal service. When he came here, he championed the cause of French-language services in Ontario.

Comme ministre responsable des Affaires francophones, il a su répondre aux besoins de la communauté pour une institution post-secondaire en appuyant activement l'établissement du premier collège francophone, la Cité collégiale à Ottawa, avec la participation des députés de Thunder Bay, Atikokan et Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke. Bernard Grandmaître est peut-être plus connu comme le père de la Loi 8. Par son leadership, il a contribué au sens de sécurité culturelle et constitutionnelle de la francophonie ontarienne.

We will remember Ben Grandmaître with immense respect, profound gratitude and enduring affection.

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Je tiens à remercier les électeurs d'Ottawa-Vanier pour l'appui qu'ils m'ont accordé le 3 juin dernier. J'aimerais aussi saluer et remercier les nombreux bénévoles qui, par leur travail acharné et leurs efforts, ont permis que je sois ici aujourd'hui.

To the people of Ottawa-Vanier, I thank you for the opportunity to serve you at Queen's Park and for placing your confidence in me. I pledge to do my utmost to bring your concerns to this assembly. I am delighted to be a member of our Liberal caucus and I am very proud to be the successor of Horace Racine, Albert Roy and Bernard Grandmaître in Ottawa-Vanier, under the dynamic leadership of the member from Ottawa-South.

My constituency of Ottawa-Vanier is as diverse as any in Ontario and probably more diverse than most ridings. It is with humility that I come here to represent my neighbours, my former colleagues, hundreds of people with whom I went to school many years ago and who still live in the riding, and everyone else who has moved to the area in the last half-century.

Je représente des gens très riches et des gens très pauvres. Je représente des personnes handicapées ayant des besoins spéciaux.

I represent young people looking for meaningful employment and adequate, affordable housing. I represent the homeless. In my riding there are several overburdened daytime and nighttime facilities struggling with the challenge of providing the most basic assistance for those devastated by poverty, loneliness and misery, by the loss

of family, the loss of friends, the loss of dignity and the loss of hope.

I represent squeegee kids, tomorrow's voters, and those squeegee kids who are already voters.

Je représente un comté avec une grande proportion d'aînés, des aînés impliqués dans la communauté, des bénévoles oeuvrant pour et avec leur communauté. Ils jouent un rôle de premier plan afin de garder l'unité de notre communauté.

I represent as well those seniors who are living on the edge of poverty or already in poverty, a sad legacy of our shortcomings in the distribution of wealth, an indictment of woefully inadequate public policy in this regard.

I also represent hundreds of homosexuals, perhaps a few thousand, who are no doubt rejoicing at the change to provincial status that gave them their fundamental rights only last week.

I also represent people of all ethnocultural backgrounds.

Je représente une importante et active population d'expression française. Aucune de leurs inquiétudes n'a été adressée dans le discours du trône. Leur futur statut dans un environnement municipal restructuré dans la région d'Ottawa-Carleton a passé sous silence.

D'ailleurs, il est de mon devoir de tout faire, en ce 10^e anniversaire de la mise en oeuvre de la Loi 8, pour non seulement la défendre mais pour faire face à ce qui menace son efficacité et son plein respect.

Le transfert des responsabilités des services provinciaux aux municipalités m'inquiète et j'y verrai. L'annonce tantôt de voir l'abolition des subventions au Collège d'Alfred qui pourrait entraîner sa fermeture est un autre exemple du fait que la Loi 8 pour ce gouvernement n'a aucune importance.

I represent thousands of persons whose livelihood is small business as sole owners, partners, or valued employees. Small business is the engine of our economy, the great provider of employment.

I also represent teachers. Teachers are professionals. They have the training and the certification to practise the profession of helping to form tomorrow's adults with today's children. It is time this government began showing teachers the respect this essential profession deserves and to work with them, not against them, to support them in their vocation.

This government has announced province-wide testing for teachers. Don't you know that these teachers are already subjected to a comprehensive evaluation process? The Ontario College of Teachers has developed standards of practice and a code of ethics for the teaching profession.

This government has repeatedly said that the education money must be placed in the classroom. Don't you think this is a costly endeavour with doubtful results?

What about the school closings in Ottawa-Carleton? When will we look over the funding formula?

Je représente des étudiants et des étudiantes qui se préparent à poursuivre leur éducation post-secondaire en Ontario. Notre province a le plus bas niveau d'allocations

de subventions « per capita » de toutes les provinces au Canada. Je m'inquiète du futur de mon petit-fils, Jean-Sébastien, qui est ma joie et mon inspiration et qui un jour héritera d'un système d'éducation mal subventionné. Je veux pour lui une éducation de qualité.

I have been involved in community activities all my life. In particular, I have spent a great deal of my free time being involved in politics, usually for the Liberal Party. Let me be very frank when I say that I wear my political activities as a badge of honour. May no one suggest that there is anything unseemly about partisan political activity. I certainly do not believe so. On this question I do not take a back seat to anyone.

My philosophy is to work with those who want to be part of the solution to our problem, and in that spirit I will always welcome advice from my constituents regardless of their political background. When that advice comes from those who respect what we do, we know that such respect is ultimately respect for democracy, for our traditions and for a responsible government. I have gained a reputation for being a fighter for francophone affairs and intend to live up to that reputation.

J'aimerais encore une fois rappeler au gouvernement qu'il est essentiel que les francophones de cette province aient accès à des services complets de santé en français et à une formation également en français pour les médecins et les professionnels de la santé que seul l'hôpital Montfort, une institution unique en Ontario, peut offrir.

I am also an ardent believer in the collective and collaborative strength of women and the amazing solutions to problems that result from that strength. Thank goodness for such resilience, because we face problems that are often unique to our gender. Statistically, we are far more likely to be victims of domestic violence, of sexual harassment and of poverty. Women need a voice, a political voice. We need greater political representation. The question is no longer when, but how. We need more women in politics now. Women are needed in politics to ensure that governments don't neglect the issues that are perceived to be women's issues but affect society as a whole, issues such as affordable daycare, access to quality medical care and adequate funding for women's shelters and for the children who flee with their mothers.

I may represent the second-largest francophone constituency in Ontario, but I can assure all the members of this House that I have no axe to grind and that I do not have a francophone chip on my shoulder.

Je veux l'égalité pour tous. C'est avec enthousiasme que je représenterai mes commettants et mes commettantes. Je crois fermement que l'Ontario est une province pleine de potentiel et d'enthousiasme et d'opportunités. C'est en mettant de côté nos idéaux partisans et en servant bien la population de l'Ontario indépendamment des différences de croyance, de couleur, de religion ou de langue que nous réussirons. Je représente le comté d'Ottawa-Vanier et j'en suis fière.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): I'm certainly pleased to rise and join the debate and follow my colleague from Ottawa-Vanier.

First of all, I certainly want to thank the people of Hamilton East for giving me the opportunity to come back to Queen's Park to represent them. It's a riding that I'm proud to represent. I've represented it since 1995. It's a riding that I'm proud to share at the federal level with the Honourable Sheila Copps, Minister of Canadian Heritage.

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It's a riding made up of hard-working individuals, hard-nosed individuals, who work very hard to take care of their homes, take care of their kids, try to meet their monthly commitments and do their best to raise a family. It's a riding that I am proud to represent. It's also a riding that I'm proud to say voted 80% against the Mike Harris agenda. It's a riding that rejected the Mike Harris agenda outright.

I want to also, as I stand here, pay tribute to my opponents in the campaign, particularly the NDP candidate, Bob Sutton, who suffered a personal loss with the loss of his father during the campaign, but who carried on in a very classy manner with a lot of dignity and a lot of fight. Certainly the riding is better for Mr Sutton having been a candidate, and I certainly have gained a great deal of respect for Mr Sutton and the work he did and the adversity that he fought to overcome during the campaign. He should be congratulated.

As we go through the throne speech, what is interesting is this continuous Tory-American hot-button politics that we see time after time. They're great at borrowing American ideas. They talk about squeegee kids; borrowed the idea out of the page of Mayor Giuliani, the Republican mayor of New York City, who felt that the way you get rid of squeegee kids is you put them in jail and just hide them somewhere and that takes care of the problem; you no longer have squeegee kids in New York City.

Mike Harris believes in the same approach. Instead of dealing with the root cause, instead of dealing with why those individuals are on the street, somehow, Mike Harris and the Tories believe that these individuals enjoy being out on a street corner in the middle of winter making 50 cents cleaning a car window. They think that somehow it's a great enterprising business; it's Tory work creation. The reality is there are some deep-rooted problems with many of those kids, causes that have to be dealt with. Sources of funding have to be given to agencies to support those kids. Instead, what does Mike Harris do? We'll just lock them up, we'll make it illegal for kids to be squeegee kids, and that takes care of the problem. It doesn't take care of the issue, but we just put it away somewhere.

Then we borrow a page from Governor John Engler of Michigan. Great idea. Three years ago, John Engler came up with this brainwave—drug testing for welfare recipients. Another Republican governor came up with this idea of drug testing for welfare. So what do the Mike Murphys and the rest of the American consultants that you hire to run your campaigns do? They say, "Let's bring in drug testing for welfare recipients of Ontario."

It's great hot-button politics. It's the best way of trying to score cheap, sleazy political points at the expense of the most vulnerable people in this province.

You've made a career out of it as a government. You've made a history of it. Whether it's cutting benefits for welfare recipients, whether it's drug testing or whether it's cutting welfare recipients off, your government has made a career our of beating up on the most vulnerable in our society, and you continue to do that to score cheap political points because your American, paid consultants have told you that that will get you votes. But it's not right.

You go after welfare fraud. My colleagues have mentioned about your double standards already. Somehow you think that double jeopardy is OK in welfare fraud but not in anywhere else. So someone gets convicted of fraud. Yes, welfare fraud is wrong and government has a responsibility to root it out. You believe it's OK for someone to be convicted, to pay the price, to serve whatever time, to pay whatever fine, but that's not good enough for you. You can't get enough out of that person. You can't punish that welfare mom enough, can you? You can't punish that person enough. You then have to go that next step and do what's unprecedented in Canadian history, and let me tell you, probably will not hold up a court challenge, and you're going to ban that person from receiving welfare for life.

To those kids who may be dependent on our welfare system at that point, those kids whose mom may have been convicted of defrauding the system, your approach is simple: "You know what? To hell with you. Starve. Go out on the street. Go to a food bank. Be homeless." Because we're going to punish that individual not only once, not twice, but three times. Why? Because your pollsters and your consultants tell you that that works. That works from a public opinion point of view. Is it right? Is it moral? No, but, of course, it's cheap, hot-button American politics.

You talk about your tax cuts, another great page out of Christine Todd Whitman, the governor of New Jersey, the inventor of the tax cut, and you followed it. I'm not sure what it is with Tory provincial governments in this province, with your consultants, with your political advisers who have this obsession with American Republican-style politics, but every single one of your major hot-button issues has been borrowed from your friends in the States.

When you look at the rest of the throne speech, when we talk about health care—I'm not sure if that throne speech addressed the concerns of my constituents who need cancer treatment and who have been sent to Buffalo and who have been sent to Thunder Bay. I didn't notice anything in the throne speech that's going to help my constituent who now has to go to Thunder Bay to get cancer radiation treatment. Because there's no space in Hamilton and there's no space in Buffalo, we have to go to Thunder Bay. You were silent on that, weren't you? That's amazing.

You talk about the environment. You talk about environmental protection, which affects my riding. I have

a riding that is heavily industrialized, and many of my residents are affected by pollution, by emissions, by air quality. The auditors told you four years ago that there were over 200 air quality standards that are badly out of date and you, until today, have still not moved to upgrade one of those air quality standards. I do not see one commitment in the throne speech that's going to deal with that.

You talk about tougher laws for hazardous waste, but you don't talk about the staff to enforce those laws. As you do in every area of environmental protection, you talk the talk but you fail to walk the walk.

You talk about education. My colleague from Essex mentioned earlier about special needs kids. We had over 34 kids in the city of Hamilton who were out of school for almost two months—34 disabled kids who were forced out of school by this government for almost two months—

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): No, by the local board.

Mr Agostino: —not being able to provide funding. Because of the stupid, ridiculous funding formula that this government has brought in, 34 kids were out of school for two months.

The member from Scarborough has the gall to defend that stupid policy that is hurting kids in my riding, and it is a disgrace. It is a disgrace, what you have done to disabled kids in this province. Over 500 kids have to attend part-time because this government decided that giving a tax cut to the wealthy was more important than looking after disabled kids in this province. That is your legacy, disabled kids not being able to go to school because you don't give enough money. That is an absolute disgrace you should be ashamed of. This is the government funding formula that has caused this.

The reality is that this throne speech contained more of the same rhetoric, more of the same Tory bravado when it comes to beating up the most vulnerable, but it contains very little to help average Ontarians. They call them real Ontarians. I don't distinguish between real Ontarians and unreal Ontarians. All Ontarians are equal; all Ontarians should be treated properly. This government seems to discourage that.

Then they talk about the economy. It's funny, you took credit and you went to great lengths to talk about job creation, all the wonderful work you've done. Somehow, when Procter and Gamble closed in my riding, there was silence from the Tory side of the House. I didn't hear the Premier get up in the House and announce that Procter and Gamble had closed, with the hundreds of jobs that went with it. When Case closed in my riding last summer, again, I didn't hear the Premier stand up in the House, or any member of the Tory government in the Hamilton area come to the rallies in front of the plant and stand on a flatbed truck with myself, the mayor of the city, union leaders and talk to the hundreds of workers who were going to be out of work and who didn't have a decent severance package. Where were the Tory members, where was the Premier talking to the Case

workers and to the Procter and Gamble workers in my riding who lost their jobs? I never saw any. You only have selective credit in this province. You only take responsibility for things you want to and you wash your hands of things you don't want to. You can't have it both ways. If you want to take responsibility for job creation, then you take responsibility for job loss and stand up and admit that your policies have screwed up and have hurt Ontarians.

I can tell you, as my leader, Dalton McGuinty, did on election night, this fight is not over. They have won one round. This fight is going to continue. We're going to continue to fight on behalf of those 55% of Ontarians who rejected your agenda. I can tell you that we're going to hold you accountable in the next four years in this Legislature, because we owe it to the people of Ontario who have said no to Mike Harris, no to this brutal agenda, no to this dictatorship style of politics, and we're going to be here every single day going after you and making sure you're held accountable for all your actions.

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M. Bisson : Premièrement, au membre d'Ottawa-Vanier, un très bon discours la première fois à l'assemblée. On connaît bien la madame puis on sait bien qu'elle va être un autre allié ici à l'Assemblée législative quand ça vient au dossier francophone, quelque chose pour lequel on a toujours besoin de lutter. Je trouve ça très ironique qu'à la veille de l'anniversaire de la Loi 8, le gouvernement provincial de M. Mike Harris propose qu'ils vont couper la subvention au Collège d'Alfred de la part du ministère de l'Agriculture de 1,5 \$ million. Je trouve ça ironique qu'un gouvernement conservateur, la veille de l'anniversaire de la Loi 8, se trouve encore dans la situation d'attaquer l'hôpital Montfort, tel qu'on a vu ces dernières années. Je trouve ça très ironique, la veille de l'anniversaire de la Loi 8, que le gouvernement de M. Mike Harris a affaibli la Loi 8 en allouant le transfert de beaucoup de services provinciaux aux municipalités, sans protection de la Loi 8 elle-même.

Je trouve ça non seulement ironique, mais je trouve que c'est un acheminement, je dirais même un patron pour ce gouvernement conservateur envers les services en français pour la communauté.

To the member from Hamilton East, I also would like to comment on one of the parts of your speeches where you talked about taking issue with the government's mantra when it comes to attacking people on welfare. I wonder if you can comment on the following: It's interesting that the government takes the position that they will ban for life someone who is convicted of defrauding people from collecting welfare but, at the same time, after this general election of 1995, they appointed somebody to their cabinet who was convicted not for defrauding welfare but defrauding income tax. I wonder if there's a double standard, when you see a provincial government on the one hand who says it's OK for the corporate elite to go out and defraud your income tax, but somehow we're going to hit hard people who are on welfare. Does that mean there's a double standard?

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): It certainly is a pleasure to have a couple of minutes to reply to some of the comments that were made here tonight.

In my first comment I would ask a question of the member from Hamilton East: Where were you when people were dumping hazardous waste into your constituency? Where did you run? To the States? I didn't see anything mentioned about the States in the throne speech.

Pour ma collègue d'Ottawa-Vanier, je voudrais prendre une référence aux comptes publics de l'Ontario 1998-1999. Si on regarde la place des dépenses par catégories principales : on dépense 34 % de chaque dollar qui est collecté en Ontario pour la santé ; sur l'éducation et la formation, on dépense 20 % de chaque dollar dans la province ; pour l'intérêt sur la dette publique, 16 %, puis qui est responsable pour l'intérêt sur la dette publique ? Les libéraux, les néo-démocrates, parce qu'ils ont rendu la province dans les dernières 10 années, dans la dette. Alors on prend 16 % de chaque dollar qu'on dépense pour servir la dette publique maintenant, madame. Si on regarde la sévérité de cette dette-là, vraiment ça affecte tous les services qu'on peut essayer de faire parvenir aux résidents de la province. C'est vraiment une situation très sérieuse.

Pour mon confrère de Glengarry-Prescott-Russell, je suis d'accord avec vous que vous avez des grands « concerns » avec ce qui se passe dans votre région. Mais vraiment, ce n'est pas la première fois. On regarde qu'est-ce qui s'est passé à Ridgetown, qu'est-ce qui s'est passé avec les néo-démocrates avec le collège d'agriculture dans ma région avant. Ils l'ont fermé eux autres. Ils l'ont fermé complètement. Ils n'ont pas juste réduit le montant de subventions qu'on faisait parvenir au collège, mais ils l'ont fermé complètement.

Applause.

M. Lalonde: Je suis fier de voir que d'autres personnes membres du Parti conservateur reconnaissent mes inquiétudes. Mais tout d'abord, je tiens à féliciter la députée d'Ottawa-Vanier. Elle a démontré qu'elle était prête à défendre les droits des Ontariens, les droits des francophones. Elle saura aussi défendre adéquatement les droits de la femme. Elle a une compétence dans le domaine de l'éducation. Elle est peut-être une nouvelle députée ici à l'Assemblée législative, mais laissez-moi vous dire qu'elle a définitivement beaucoup d'expérience dans le domaine de la politique.

Elle a démontré auparavant qu'elle connaissait bien la loi ontarienne. Elle est aussi la personne qui a oeuvré au sein du comité de notre père de la Loi 8, son prédecesseur, Bernard Grandmaitre. Elle a été sa gérante de campagne pendant plusieurs années, tout ça pour vous dire qu'elle rentre ici et qu'elle connaît définitivement les lois à suivre.

En page 13 du discours du trône, j'ai la copie anglaise ici, c'est clair : « Your government believes that students deserve to graduate with the skills and knowledge they need to get jobs. It will expand the number of community college and university courses with direct job link. » L'annonce que nous venons d'avoir ce soir à TFO, à 7 h

ce soir même, n'indique pas vraiment ce que le gouvernement a mentionné dans son discours du trône. Je pourrais dire que c'est du pareil au pire que nous entendons à tous les jours dans cette Chambre. Le Collège d'Alfred a un budget d'au-delà du 4 \$ millions. Le gouvernement provincial donnait des subventions de 2,2 \$ millions. La balance, nous recouvrions ces coûts à travers des cours faits sur mesure. J'aurais la chance d'en discuter davantage.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): .The member for Broadview-Greenwood.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Broadview-Greenwood): Thank you, Speaker. You must have taken all those photographs home and been practising all our ridings, because you're doing a very good job of remembering, much faster than I did. I congratulate you on your post.

I also would like to take this opportunity, as did the other members who spoke for the first time in this new Parliament, to congratulate all those who were re-elected and elected for the first time, and to say that I very much look forward to working with you in a positive vein. We'll see, won't we?

I also want to thank the voters of Broadview-Greenwood very much for their confidence in me at a time when—there is no doubt about it, the NDP were affected quite negatively in this election. We have nine members sitting here, and that's the reality. I am very humbled by the confidence that the voters of Broadview-Greenwood had in me, not only in electing me again for the third time but electing me by a very wide margin. I certainly want to pledge once again that I will continue—

Interjection.

Ms Churley: I thought this was my speech. It's a two-minute response, isn't it?

I want to congratulate the members who just gave absolutely wonderful speeches about the awful things this government is doing. Now that I've done all of that, when I get up in about 20 seconds from now, I won't have to do that all over again. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Response?

Mr Agostino: I certainly want to thank my colleague the member for Ottawa-Vanier, who spoke very well to the concerns of her riding and the way she's going to deal with representing all Ontarians across this province, which is clearly the Liberal way; and the members for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, Timmins-James Bay, Glengarry-Prescott-Russell and Broadview-Greenwood for your comments in regard to the debate.

I very much appreciate the member for Broadview-Greenwood thanking her constituents in her two-minute response. It is somewhat unique.

Ms Churley: Saving time for my 20 minutes.

Mr Agostino: Exactly. You can use it later.

I want to briefly respond to the member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, who talked about hazardous waste. I had a little chat with the member for Stoney Creek, but didn't quite get the whole story in that 10-second conversation. You failed to mention that it was your government that approved the landfill site. You failed to mention that it was your government that was responsible

for monitoring what went into the landfill site. You failed to mention that it was your government that failed to bring in legislation. Of course the Liberal-turned-Tory member for Stoney Creek would now like to take the credit for being the great saviour, but the silence has been deafening since the election campaign, as it was when the report was hidden and not released, covered up till after the election. It was when this government failed to act the way you wanted it to.

I hope the members will encourage this government now, when it comes to hazardous waste, to hire inspectors to enforce those laws you've brought in. The reality is that this government likes to talk the talk. They talk tough all the time. They are the big, tough guys, pounding their chests, beating up on everybody who gets in their way, and then when they bring in legislation, they don't bring in the staff to enforce that legislation. It's totally another useless effort by this government.

I just want to remind this government that you were elected to govern for all Ontarians. Although not all Ontarians voted for you, once you hold the power of office, you take on that responsibility. You are elected to represent folks who voted for you and those who didn't. You are elected to govern for all. I remind you to do that and for a change try to do it with sympathy and understanding for all Ontarians.

The Acting Speaker: And now the member for Broadview-Greenwood.

Ms Churley: Let me take this opportunity to congratulate the member for Hamilton East on a fine speech indeed.

Picking up where I left off, I want to pledge again to the constituents in Broadview-Greenwood, and in particular to my new constituents in the part of East York which is now part of the riding of Broadview-Greenwood, and a little part of the old Beaches-Woodbine, that I enjoyed working with them before the election and certainly look forward to continuing that work.

I also want to take this opportunity to talk a little bit about some of the people and organizations in both the old riding of Riverdale and the larger Broadview-Greenwood riding who worked so hard in the last regime under the Tory government in fighting, successfully in some cases. I want to remind those out there who didn't vote for the Tories, who don't like the Tory policies and in fact are being hurt by the Tory policies, that there were times, believe it or not, under this government in the last four years where constituents, organizations and individuals, working together with their member, were able to make some changes and force the government to back down.

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I am proud to say that people in my old riding of Riverdale, and people from East York, did have successful fights against the government. Let me mention Jason Wong and Andonis Artemakis, who are part of the small business community. There are others too, but I single those two out for putting up and being the first ones on the street, especially Jason Wong and the Chinese

chamber of commerce, with banners fighting the Harris government's huge tax increases for small business.

If you'll recall, there were about seven botched bills on that, and it was the small business community that this government touts as being one of the sectors they care most about that was badly hurt by that. Let us bear in mind that all they got was a three-year reprieve. They don't know what's going to happen after that. There are also enough loopholes in it that there are some small businesses who are still faced with 100% increases and more.

There were the parents groups and the teachers groups that fought ferociously to keep the 11 schools throughout the new riding configuration of Broadview-Greenwood—11 in one riding—which were going to close because of the Harris government's funding formula. They fought successfully and managed to keep those schools open. Those are two of the groups of people who came together and fought hard and actually, although not completely, had some success fighting this government.

I want to applaud the people who fought to keep Riverdale Hospital open. That hospital was one of the ones slated to be closed, and the community and workers at the hospital, the president of the hospital, many people working alongside me and my office, fought hard and managed to keep that hospital open, albeit it's going to be a long-term-care facility, and we still have real concerns about what is going to happen to those very sick people who live there now, who need more extended care. Nonetheless, that was a big win for our community.

I want to thank all those people who put in countless volunteer hours to fight successfully to keep important community assets open in our community of Riverdale and Broadview-Greenwood.

I want to refer to something that happened earlier today. I want to go on the record and I want to make it clear how offended I was this afternoon when the environment minister was being asked a question by the member for St Catharines on an environmental matter connected with the whole Steve Gilchrist affair and all of that. I'm sure that the Minister of the Environment was trying to be funny—I would have been outraged by it anyway—but on the day that we have announced that this is Wife Assault Prevention—

Hon Frank Klees (Minister without Portfolio): On a point of order, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Point of order. Stop the clock, please.

Hon Mr Klees: Mr Speaker, this may well be a point of privilege. I'll let you make the decision. To the point that the member is referring, I really feel that—

The Acting Speaker: Under which standing order are you speaking?

Hon Mr Klees: Which standing order is a point of privilege?

The Acting Speaker: If it's a point of privilege, you would have to file it.

Hon Mr Klees: Then I'll do a point of order, because I really believe that the point the honourable member is

about to make is grossly unfair to the Minister of the Environment.

The Acting Speaker: That is not a point of order. It's a little hard and difficult for me to be clairvoyant. Member for Broadview-Greenwood.

Ms Churley: Let me continue making my point. It's clear that the member is a little nervous about what I'm going to say, because hopefully he agrees with me that when the Minister of the Environment responded, trying to be funny, on the day when Wife Assault Prevention Month was announced, and made a joke about, "I don't beat my wife either," there was such a reaction from myself and Shelley Martel and Frances Lankin and others that the minister immediately said, "I know it's serious and I retract it."

Interjections.

Ms Churley: The Liberals want me to acknowledge that they were outraged by it. But seriously, I remember a couple of years ago—I don't know what it is about the members from Brampton—the member for Brampton North, if you'll recall, was sitting here at the time. He yelled at me, when I was up speaking to the Premier about breakfast programs, that I should go home and make breakfast for my kids, and ended up having to retract that statement. It was quite offensive today when the Minister of the Environment came out with a remark like that again.

I don't know if he and the members who were screaming at me a moment ago about my raising this understand the significance of making a joke about that. Hopefully, they do. But I want to go on the record that it was absolutely astounding that a minister of the crown would say that, especially on a day like today. This is the attitude right now from the guys sitting across from me there in the Tory rump down here, still laughing and joking about it. You'd think that they would have the dignity to understand that the comment made today by their environment minister was totally inappropriate. I rest my case by the reaction that I'm getting right now.

The Acting Speaker: Order. Stop the clock. The member for London-Fanshawe.

Mr Frank Mazzilli (London-Fanshawe): The member referred to me as the guy across the way. My riding is London-Fanshawe, just so she can be corrected.

Ms Churley: I want to talk a little bit about what was missing from the throne speech. The government members in particular get up and brag about all the great things they've done, and will continue to do, for Ontario. What they don't talk about at all, what we don't hear anything about, is this growing gap that's very real between the rich and the poor.

Interjections.

Ms Churley: Once again, they're demonstrating that they'd rather not hear about that.

Let me tell you a fact about the tax cut that they like to brag about. It will add over \$30 billion to Ontario's public debt. We get a tax cut that helps the rich but adds to our deficit. Over half of the tax cut went to the richest 20% of Ontario families. If you're in the top half of the

richest 1% of families, you get \$15,586. If you're among the poorest 10% of Ontario families, you get \$150.

These Tories like to talk about the fact that they've made tax cuts and they're paying down the deficit and everybody is benefiting. What they don't look at is that those who only get about \$150 back are paying higher tuition fees, are paying more user fees. We've all seen that, but no, they don't talk about the user fees that are being put on the poorest in our society. That is the reality.

I also want to talk about child care. The government is trying to make sure, they say, that all welfare recipients go back to work. They come up with these programs—they've come up with yet another one for teen mothers—but they're not creating the child care spaces for hundreds, in fact thousands, of women out there who not only want to work but in many cases have to work, without even making value judgments about whether or not the kids are better off at home or in daycare, although there are all kinds of studies to show that children fare very well when they get early intervention and education.

Two thirds of moms with children under three have paid work now and most of these women are working because they need it for their families to survive. It puts food on the table and a roof over her family's head. It is incumbent upon the government to make sure that there is licensed, regulated daycare so that when these women go to work they know their children are in a safe place. What we don't want to see, which is beginning to happen, is some women displacing others. There is a tremendously long waiting list for women who absolutely need child care to get out there and work.

There was a report issued—I doubt if any of the Tory members read it, but I suggest they might like to do that and see the other side. The Centre for Social Justice put out a report in October 1998.

Ms Mushinski: That's condescending.

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Ms Churley: They're worried that I'm being condescending, when they stand up all night and talk about how wonderful they are and that the opposition has nothing to offer. They talk about me being condescending. Give me a break. Get real.

I suggest the members opposite read this report. It shows that any benefits from our economy are going almost entirely to those with the highest incomes while the poor and the middle class are getting squeezed. That is a fact; that is the reality. Perhaps the members find it condescending, but I suggest that this government take a look at those facts and start trying to figure out what they're going to do about it.

The report shows that the richest 10% of Canadians made 314 times more than the poorest. From 1995 to 1996, the poorest 10% of Canadian families with children under 18 saw their average after-tax income drop from \$15,208 to \$13,453. That is the reality, my friends. In a radio interview, the author of the report took dead aim at the Harris government's income tax scheme. She said that in Ontario the richest group of taxpayers got the most back.

The report demonstrates that the fastest rate of job growth is in the lowest-paid jobs.

Interjections.

Ms Churley: It's boring to you, isn't it, member for Scarborough? I'm sorry.

The Acting Speaker: Speak to the Chair, please.

Ms Churley: But for the people who are in those low-paid, ghetto jobs it is not boring, believe me.

It also examines the growing phenomenon of self-employment and finds evidence that this is part of the growing gap. Listen to this: "Of the roughly 400,000 jobs created since Harris was elected, more than half of those are in the so-called self-employed category." That does not necessarily sound like a problem until you realize that in 1995 more than 16% of the self-employed in Canada had incomes less than \$5,000 a year while only 3% of paid employees are in that category.

What this makes clear is that many of the self-employed are really self-unemployed. Many of the people we count as real jobs have been downsized out of their jobs and can't find decent-paying jobs. So they're looking for contract work and making the best of a bad situation. The study shows that self-employed women, in particular, make about half of what self-employed men do. That's a much bigger gap than in the regular workforce.

I want to give you a few more facts from this report to think about. On average, the top 100 CEOs in Canada saw a 56% increase in compensation in 1997. For ordinary families, the families we're trying to represent here, wages are not even keeping up with inflation. In 1973, 60% of families with children under 18 earned between \$24,500 and \$65,000, and that's in 1996 dollars. By 1996 that middle class had shrunk. Only 44% of families with dependent children made between \$24,500 and \$65,000.

The good news is the report offers some suggestions and recommendations. They lay out a very serious problem in our society, where this gap between the rich and the poor continues to get wider and wider. That is not just a problem for those who are at the very bottom of our income bracket, but it's a problem for all of us as a society. There are some very good recommendations in this report, and I suggest that the government take a look at it and start thinking about ways to implement some of those recommendations. Unfortunately, the recommendations are counter to many of the measures the government has taken already, which have even made the situation worse. I have copies of this report, which I'll be happy to give to anybody who is interested.

I want to briefly talk about some of my critic areas; as you know, I have several of them. I want to talk about the disabled portfolio. The government promised in 1995—in fact, before the election—that they would bring in a new Ontario disabilities act. Our government brought in employment equity. That's where we put our emphasis at that time, and disabled people were a large part of that. This government then threw out employment equity completely, so all the benefits that would have gone to disabled people, among others, within that bill were thrown out. At the same time, they did not bring in an act that

they promised. So they not only didn't do what they said they'd do, but they made the situation worse. We have offered to work in co-operation with both the Liberals and the Tories and not make this a partisan issue, and I pledge that again tonight. If we can work together to make sure that this act is put in place very quickly, I really want the opportunity to make that happen.

Let me also add—and I wish the minister could hear me talk about this; I know he's around tonight. We know there's a real problem with the Ontario disabilities support plan. My party has been raising it regularly and we will continue to do so. We talked last week about the mix-up with the cheques because of the old computer system. Fortunately, as I understand, those cheques got out, but there are going to be more problems. There's already an adjudication problem, where people are having to wait months. It's a nightmare. It's a disaster. It is underresourced and it's a botched implementation which is hurting disabled people. There are disabled children who can't be in school because the supports aren't there. The government is letting disabled people in this province down once again, and I very much hope we can reverse this trend.

The other area I'm responsible for, as always, is the environment. I'm disappointed to see that the government has cut even more from the Ministry of the Environment. We already know that there are hardly any front-line workers left in either the Ministry of the Environment or Ministry of Natural Resources. I'm very concerned about that. We have a terrible air-quality problem. We have more and more hazardous waste coming into the province from the States. We need to see more resources go back into that ministry, not more taken out.

Finally, for only a moment I want to talk about another area where I'm the critic, and that is children and youth. I mentioned child care briefly, but I want to come back to squeegee kids. Some of you were here this afternoon and some weren't. I know the government gets really upset when we talk about it, and we get accusations that there's chaos on the streets and that the whole world is going to come to an end if the government doesn't act on this. I want to say very clearly to the government that I am offended—and I said this earlier this afternoon—that somehow, let's pin it on the women. Women are scared of these people.

I am not scared of squeegee kids when I'm sitting behind a big hunk of metal. I'm more scared when I'm walking home late at night. I'm more scared about the reality of gang violence and home invasion. Those are the kinds of things that women and people in general are scared about.

The reality is that young people in this province do not have the same opportunities that many from our generation had. Jobs are hard to come by. The minimum wage hasn't been raised since the government came to power in 1995. The supports aren't there for these kids. Housing is now a disaster. Rent control is gone. We have shelters full to the brim right now, with nowhere for people to go. We have a lot of problems out there which this throne

speech didn't even talk about at all, and that's the tragedy of the situation we're talking about tonight.

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Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke North): I'd like to make some observations about the member for Broadview-Greenwood, particularly with respect to her remarks on the throne speech. She says that this government's priorities are turned upside down—that was the essence of her remarks, from what I could hear—that it's a tragedy that we haven't looked after children. In point of fact, this government, in the last session, took very effective action in bringing changes to the Child and Family Services Act, particularly in getting resources to children at risk.

Interjection.

Mr Hastings: I know that this is going off the throne speech. The member from Hamilton says this government is obsessed with American standards, American themes. Yet the member for Windsor West, the member for the riding next door to Windsor West, and the member for—it used to be Oakwood—guess where these three were in April 1998. Talk about obsessiveness with American campaigns and elections. These three members were in Washington, DC. How they paid for their trips, I'll leave it for them to talk about.

Interjection.

Mr Hastings: How do I know that? I was there myself to look at what was going on, but at least I paid for it.

Getting back to the member for Broadview-Greenwood, the environment is one of the key priorities of this government, and we have acted in that area, in particular with the vehicle emissions program.

Interjections.

Mr Hastings: You can laugh all you want—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Questions and comments? The member for Timiskaming-Cochrane.

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming-Cochrane): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, and congratulations on your position as an officer of the House.

Timiskaming-Cochrane, I know, is new for you to say and it's new for me too with our new, reduced House. It's very interesting riding.

I observed today when the minister for technology boasted about this government's accomplishments in helping rural Ontario with high-speed data transmission that I'm going to have to get up and ask him a question someday, and tell him that of the 7,700 party-line households in this country, 4,850 are in my riding. We're so far behind the times.

While some of rural Ontario is sending data at Concorde jet speed, a lot of my constituents are still stuck with a Model-T Ford telephone system. They're way back in the pioneer days. As far as I'm concerned, that's just not acceptable. I'm going to be calling upon this government in a very formal way in the next few months as we work out some proposals with our local phone company, to make a contribution, as well as the federal government should be making a contribution, to make sure that every Canadian and every Ontarian has access to at least one private line. I think that's very important.

The CRTC, up until now, did not allow any other outside contribution. Therefore, it could not have been done in the past without putting up phone rates \$100 to \$200 a month, which would be prohibitive.

When I hear a question such as that and an answer such as that, the minister needs to know that not all of Ontario is doing as swimmingly as you might see in southern Ontario. I wish we had little bit more of it.

We're not doing as well, but we'll be calling.

Mr Bisson: I'll just pick up on the comments from the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane. There are some communities within your riding that have one telephone for the entire community; for example, the community of Wahgoshig, as you well know. That is directly a problem that we're having all across northeastern Ontario when it comes to phone service, not only in Timiskaming-Cochrane, but also in Timmins-James Bay and a number of other areas.

To the member from Broadview-Greenwood, I think she's right when she talks about what's happening in the economy of today. The Tories get up and have a great time trying to talk about how good the economy is doing. They're just out there with their little speeches, saying: "Oh, Mike, we're doing such a good job. Look what we're doing in the economy." The reality is, this economy that they talk about, by and large, is not benefiting most of the people in this province who really need it.

We're finding that the majority of jobs that are being created, if you go back and look at the stats, are at or close to minimum wage. The reality is that what we're seeing with jobs that are being created within the stats they give, supposedly all good news, is that we're losing good-paying jobs in the industrial sector to what we now call McJobs, basically minimum-wage jobs.

Interjections.

Mr Bisson: That's the reality. How would you like to raise your family on minimum wage? Yes, it is disgusting that you guys stand there trying to support minimum-wage jobs. There was even an attempt at one point in this government's life to reduce the minimum wage. If they could have got away with it, they would have.

The point is simply this: The government in its policies is basically adding to what we call the growing gap. We find that in this economy the rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer. Why? Because this government snuggles up behind the corporate elite of Canada and of the United States and the multinationals and says, "Yes, siree, we'll do whatever the big multinationals have to say because we know that's where our bread is buttered, but not that of the working class."

Mr Agostino: I want to thank my colleague from Broadview-Greenwood for her comments. As usual, the member speaks with a great deal of compassion and care and understanding of the plight of many of the less fortunate in our society and in our province.

While I'm up I also want to welcome to the opposition benches the Minister of Community and Social Services, who has graced us with his presence. We certainly have promised that we would give him a seat up here a little bit closer if he decides to come over and see the light.

I'm glad the Minister of Community and Social Services was here to hear some of the comments made by the member for Broadview-Greenwood, because I think we've got to understand that when we make policy decisions, particularly as they impact social policy as it impacts people in this province, we've got to go beyond simply the number-crunching and what feels good and sounds good.

We've got to understand that every single decision we make involving a welfare recipient involves kids. There are almost 500,000 kids in this province dependent on welfare assistance, so when you cut benefits by 22%, you also cut the ability for those kids to be fed, to be clothed, to have a roof over their head by 22%. When you talk about the family support plan and the impact it has and the changes you've made there, that impacts kids.

Every single decision you make when it comes to the disability plans in this province, when it comes to rules that you change where you all of a sudden make people ineligible—and you take pride in saying they're off the welfare system—yes, they're off the welfare system, but when you simply change the rules and make them ineligible, they end up on the streets, they end up at the food banks, they end up in shelters across this province.

I think the member for Broadview-Greenwood is trying to get a simple message out to you, that you've got to take some time and some care when you're making decisions as they affect the most vulnerable in our province. It's got to be more than public opinion polls. It impacts real people and you should think about that when you make those decisions.

The Acting Speaker: Response?

Ms Churley: I can comment on my own speech, I guess. I don't think I'm going to respond to the comments on the telephone situation up north, although I have the greatest sympathy with that problem, particularly after the questions from a government backbencher to a minister today about some technology. I don't think I know a whole lot about that.

I do want to say that I find it frustrating—and I'm sure the new members over time are going to find that too—with the response, and it's from all sides of the House. I know people call me a Pollyanna and say I give Sally Field speeches and all of that. I recognize that about myself.

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education): I have never called you a Pollyanna.

Ms Churley: No. You've seen the worst side of me too. I can be as partisan as the rest of them, and more so than most.

But there are times when I find the attitude from government members very frustrating when an opposition member stands up, when that opposition member opens his or her mouth to point out some realities that we're seeing out there in communities and we're reading in studies. We are not making it up. You have your job to do as government members. I've been in government; I've been a cabinet member. I know how it works. I understand the constraints you're under and that you

have to toe the government line. We hear it daily. But the reality is that we've got some real problems in our community. We face them every day as MPPs. We all have a responsibility in the House to try to address it. You don't know it all. You don't have all the answers. Sometimes we can help. I hope very much that on some of those issues that we discuss tonight, we can work together and try to make Ontario a better place for all of us.

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The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mrs Tina Molinari (Thornhill): It's an honour to rise today to make my first speech on the debate of the throne speech. I want to welcome Rabbi Domb and other members of Thornhill who are here today.

C'est un honneur et un privilège d'avoir l'occasion de vous adresser la parole aujourd'hui afin d'exprimer ma gratitude aux électeurs et électrices de la nouvelle circonscription de Thornhill qui ont fait le 3 juin confiance en moi, de même pour les accomplissements exceptionnels du gouvernement de Mike Harris.

I'm proud to be here today with all my colleagues, as a new representative of the Mike Harris team, a team that has spent the past four years restoring great hope in this province. It is that same hope for opportunity and prosperity that led my parents from Italy to this great province in 1956. They came to Canada at a time when people had hope and faith in their government, that their work would be accomplished and that it would all be rewarded. The good news is that I can tell my children today that we have returned to a time in our province when we may again have that hope in government that our hard work and our efforts as law-abiding, taxpaying Ontarians will be rewarded.

It is my commitment to my parents and my family that led me into local politics in 1988.

Remarks in Italian.

My riding is a diverse mix of individuals that reflects a great mosaic of this province and our great country of Canada. I want to recognize and thank the Honourable Al Palladini, Minister of Economic Development and Trade, and the Honourable Dave Tsubouchi, Solicitor General for Ontario, for their exceptional work on behalf of the constituents of the new riding of Thornhill. My constituents are also fortunate to have two of the most outstanding mayors in our province: Her Worship Mayor Lorna Jackson of Vaughan; and a former Ontario legislator, His Worship Mayor Don Cousins of Markham. It is exceptional individuals in my riding who make Thornhill one of the best communities in Ontario to live and raise a family.

This province has many heroes, both well-known and unsung, and while we consistently hear about the well-known heroes in the media, it is the efforts of many unsung heroes that we never hear about who shape our lives daily and quietly without recognition.

My riding has many heroes and I would like to recognize some of them here today. It is individuals such as 12-year-old Sarah Rose Black, a student at Bishop

Scalabrin, and 12-year-old Stephanie Winston, a student at Rosedale Heights public school, who dedicate numerous hours volunteering for the Canadian Cancer Society at their schools with teachers and students.

Also very active in our community is long-time Markham Councillor Randy Barber, a participant in the Canadian Diabetes Association in York region and the Arthritis Foundation.

Most recently, I had the opportunity to attend a fund-raising dinner for the Yee Hong Centre for Markham. Yee Hong centres provide a high level of care for seniors. Dr Joseph Wong and Mr Stanley Kwan have been volunteering numerous hours to raise funds to build a new centre in Markham. Their campaign has already raised \$5 million.

I know that the Premier is very proud of Ontarians who dedicate their precious time to volunteer causes across this province, and I am equally proud that there are so many of these individuals hard at work in my riding of Thornhill. Each and every one of them deserves our congratulations.

The voters of Thornhill spoke loudly and clearly for a government whose promises made are promises kept. We are working hard to see that government works for hard-working Ontarians and delivers on new promises endorsed on June 3, 1999.

For a long time now, Thornhill residents have been telling me that they were tired of their federal government not taking the courageous steps that this provincial government did in seeing that the tax burden for hard-working Ontarians was alleviated. Hard-working Ontarians understand that the more they save and invest their hard-earned money and do not overspend, the more they will have at the end of the day and the brighter their future will be.

Our government understands this as well. We have promised and delivered the lowest personal income tax rate in the country. We are constantly urging our federal counterparts to join in tax relief at the federal government level.

We celebrate every small business person's achievement of job creation in our province—not only new jobs but secure, well-paying jobs in many sectors of the economy.

Our government is responding and we will carry on doing all we can to make sure that the Ontario economy remains strong and vibrant. It has been demonstrated many times that tax cuts create jobs. Our government will continue to reduce the burden of overtaxation of hard-working Ontarians.

In the throne speech our government has committed to cutting the provincial portion of the residential property taxes by 20%, decreasing small business corporate taxes to 4.75%, and an additional 20% income tax reduction. This will allow hard-working Ontarians to have more money at their disposal to spend, save and invest. The taxpayer protection act will ensure that all Ontarians will not be subject to tax increases without voter approval.

We must always work towards ensuring that government watches its spending, and to that end, we have

introduced a balanced budget act that will see penalties for politicians who overspend and a declaration of taxpayer rights that will ensure that people get the most from their government.

Four years ago this province's finances were out of control. The deficit approached \$11.3 billion. I faced a similar challenge as chair of the York Catholic District School Board. The reality is that deficit and debt only hurt our future and our children's future.

Fiscal responsibility, taxpayer protection and demanding and accessible education are key building blocks to the prosperity that the people of Thornhill and all of Ontario want. This government has an outstanding record on attracting investment to Ontario, promoting consumer confidence, cutting taxes and fostering an environment where business creates jobs for Ontarians.

There is proof that our plan is working. Courageous entrepreneurs all across this province are taking on the crucial challenge of creating jobs and prosperity for the people of this province and showing Ontario's competitiveness on the world scene.

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Two of these individuals, Stephanie Buccarelli and Daniela Durante, have been hard at work creating jobs and prosperity for the people of my riding. Starting with Daniela's sole proprietorship and two employees in 1994, Stephanie and Daniela joined forces in 1998 and have seen their business grow to its current 1,400-square-foot complex, providing seven jobs to people in our community. I applaud their courage as entrepreneurs and thank them for contributing to the small business effort that truly fuels this province's economy.

The Vaughan Chamber of Commerce and the Markham Board of Trade are two exceptional institutions in my riding that work hard to promote business, commerce and job creation.

The throne speech reaffirmed this government's strong commitment to education. In November 1988, I ran for trustee for the York Catholic District School Board. I was not satisfied with the curriculum and thought that I could have an impact in improving the education system. My goal was to ensure that not only my children but all the students in the York Catholic District School Board got the education they required to compete in the global market.

I quickly discovered that school boards were bound by an inadequate curriculum mandated by the province. Parents are telling me that they like the increased accountability provided through the new province-wide curriculum that clearly lays out goals and timelines for teachers, students and parents. Standard tests that measure progress and understandable report cards, which are being extended to secondary schools starting this year with grade 9, are key components.

Marshall Jarvis, past president of the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association, has said: "I think this is a good curriculum developed by teachers. I think that the government has moved in the right direction on this one. I hope they continue in other areas."

Thornhill parent Patrick Black, trustee for the York Catholic District School Board, echoed to me parents' enthusiastic support of the educational reforms that our government has brought forth.

Another exceptional inclusion in the new high school curriculum is mandatory community service—good news for every community across this province.

Exhaustive studies confirm the need for change in the education system in Ontario. Where past provincial governments long recognized the need, they were unable or unwilling to act. This government clearly demonstrated the will to move ahead and has kept its commitment to a fair and non-discriminatory funding model. The removal of education funding from local taxation was the only way to ensure equal resources per pupil throughout the publicly funded education system in Ontario. The Mike Harris Progressive Conservative government was able to achieve this.

I was also pleased to have been a trustee with the York Catholic District School Board when the two York boards undertook a variety of co-operative ventures. The joint board consortium, which is responsible for school bus transportation, planning services and purchasing services has achieved major accomplishments. The success of these two boards led to the winning of the 1997 Ontario Local Government Innovative Public Service Delivery Award.

The York Region District School Board has also been given praise for these programs from the Education Improvement Commission as being a "well run, sophisticated organization with strong leadership. The board has a clear understanding of the challenges it faces, such as rapid growth and social and economic diversity."

Thornhill has a wise range of educational opportunities. During the election, I visited with educators, parents and teachers at Netivot, Eitz Chaim, Zareinu, Leo Beack and Associated Hebrew Schools. I was very impressed with the quality of education being provided in these schools. The Jewish day schools provide the children with the education they require to learn and live within the values and beliefs of their heritage. As Jewish schools receive no funding from the province, servicing their special needs students is an even greater challenge. They have all said to me that they want our commitment to provide health support services for these very special students. I have already made the pledge to these parents that I will ensure that their concerns are heard and that their issues are addressed for the future of their children.

Eventually children move from elementary and secondary schools to post-secondary education. I am honoured to have the opportunity to work with the Honourable Dianne Cunningham, Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, as a parliamentary assistant. The exciting initiatives that the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities will be implementing will ensure that every willing and qualified Ontario student will continue to be able to attend post-secondary institutions.

Our programs and policies increased student aid to the highest level in Ontario history. The Aiming for the Top

scholarships to the top 10,000 students in Ontario who need financial assistance will support our hard-working students. The private sector will be challenged to match the government's \$35-million annual commitment.

The SuperBuild Growth Fund will provide new and improved infrastructure to meet the needs of students as the demands on our education system continue to grow. This is good news for Thornhill parents and students and good news for post-secondary education in this province. This government will be passionately dedicated to assisting these institutions to truly see that their graduates find rewarding careers and job opportunities upon graduation. Students deserve this, and a growing Ontario economy requires this.

I want to reflect briefly on the way three other throne speech commitments—health care, conservation and community safety—will benefit my constituents in Thornhill.

One of the messages I have been most proud to take to the constituents of my riding of Thornhill since being elected has been this government's outstanding record on health care funding. The riding of Thornhill has benefited directly from this government's focus on priority health care spending with funding announcements being made for many health care facilities across my riding. Baycrest Centre for Geriatric Care received a contract to build and operate a new 120-bed nursing home in 1998 from the then Minister of Long-Term Care, my colleague the honourable Cam Jackson. The York Central Hospital received almost \$32 million in funding this year, and York region as a whole received \$192 million in increased health care spending since 1995.

Mr Frank Diamant, executive vice-president of B'nai Brith and a member of our community, told me of the funding announcement to Baycrest Hospital: "We have long needed these resources for seniors in our community and the announcement for Baycrest was good news for all. It is encouraging to see a government that listens to the needs of the people in their communities."

Health care funding has been increased under this government over the past four years to an all-time provincial high of \$18.9 billion. My community of Thornhill applauds this and encourages government to carry on with plans to introduce the Patients' Bill of Rights.

This government is also busy demonstrating its commitment to conservation projects all across this province. I recently had the pleasure of attending a ceremony in my riding that saw the historic Baker sugar bush preserved. This was made possible with the provincial government commitment of just over \$1 million, thanks in part to the hard work of former local MPP and Minister of Economic Development and Trade, Al Pallidini, towards this important conservation effort.

Community safety is also of paramount importance to my constituents. York region police provide our community with programs such as Neighbourhood Watch; Block Parents; the victims' assistance program; the values, influence and peers program; the citizens awareness program; Road Watch; Risk Watch; and crime prevention through environmental design.

As the government continues to focus on priority spending in the areas of health care, education and community safety, constituents like mine in Thornhill benefit from programs like the 1,000 new police officers across Ontario, in which York region was a major benefactor. I share in my constituents' endorsement of this government's strong strides in the commitment to a safer Ontario.

We as legislators must ensure that our government truly works for Ontarians who put their trust, hope and aspirations in us so that we can continue to make this province the best place to live, work and raise a family. I am proud and honoured to make this commitment to the constituents of my riding of Thornhill.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

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Ms Di Cocco: I have to congratulate my colleague from Thornhill on her election. The member and I have a great deal in common as well as our background. I think the immigration time frame is about exactly the same time. There's a great deal of commonality in our backgrounds, and again I do want to congratulate my colleague.

I do have to say that as much as we have a lot in common. Of course, there are going to be a few things I don't necessarily agree with when it comes to the direction in which I see the province and how I see our role as members of the Legislature. I don't really agree with the fact that—education is not just about dollars and cents. It's also about morale, and of course morale is the people who are in the front lines, just like health is not just about profit, the bottom line. I also understand, as we have been in business for 25 years, what it means to have a business and try to make ends meet and work very, very hard. On the other hand, government has the role to be compassionate, and that's something that seems to be lacking in our philosophies.

I also applaud my colleague's knowledge of Italian. It's excellent. I did understand some of what she said.

The issues of deficit and debts I agree are a liability, but you have to remember that it was your government that added \$10 billion to the debt.

Interjection: No.

Ms Di Cocco: They did. That's a fact.

Mr Bisson: My congratulations to the member for Thornhill on her first speech in this Legislature, something that I'm sure she's going to remember for some time. I hope she has the opportunity to speak again soon.

It was interesting listening to her comments, especially in light of the comments on education. I listened intently to the comments made in regard to how she feels education has somehow been strengthened over the last five years, and tried to relate that back to her riding of Thornhill. I can't speak for the people of Thornhill; I'm sure that she can. But I can speak for the people of Timmins-James Bay. I was up in Moosonee on Friday and Saturday meeting with various education officials and teachers and others, in order to get a bit of a sense of

what's happening with education in that special place of the province.

I can report to the member for Thornhill, as I will report to the rest of the members of the House a little bit later, the state of education for native children up on the James Bay coast. I invite you, member for Thornhill, to come up and visit and to sit down with these children and sit down with the teachers and parents and administrators, and then come back to this assembly and tell me if you can have the same kind of speech that you gave here. Clearly, the funding model is not working for those particular communities, as I know it is not working in a number of other places. We have one third of children in those classes, both in Moose Factory and Moosonee, who are without the ability to get services in regard with special needs.

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: The member for Etobicoke-Rexdale always laments that somehow or other we're making these numbers up, but the reality is those children are not meeting it the educational norms across the province of Ontario, and by and large because of your funding formula. There are very special circumstances that affect these children when it comes to education up on the James Bay coast. I will get to that in some detail later. But I want to tell you, all is not well in the world of education when it comes to these kids, and I'd like her to repeat to them what she's just told me today.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Scarborough Centre.

Ms Mushinski: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I too would like to start off by congratulating you on your appointment to the auspicious chair in which you sit.

I also wish to extend my sincerest congratulations to the member for Thornhill, not only for her great election victory but for the wonderful speech that she made this evening. In fact, it was very refreshing that she made a speech that spoke to the throne speech.

It was interesting because I was really trying to glean from the Liberal members and the NDP members exactly what it was they were addressing in terms of the throne speech. So it was very refreshing for the member for Thornhill to come back to the meat and the substance of the debate that we're discussing this evening, that debate being on what the Honourable Hilary M. Weston, the Lieutenant Governor, said in her speech.

The honourable member for Thornhill spoke about the balanced budget. She spoke about tax cuts. Clearly, tax cuts create jobs. Had she had more time, she perhaps would have been able to elicit why we believe in our agenda so much, given the dismal track record of the previous 10 years of Liberal and NDP mismanagement when we saw 65 tax increases and lost 10,000 net jobs and saw deficits rising to the point of \$11 billion. At the same time, we were being robbed by the federal government, which was cutting grants to us for health care and robbed us of \$21 billion.

Mr Crozier: I too want to congratulate the member for Thornhill on her address regarding the throne speech

this evening. She spoke eloquently and with some passion and understanding for what it is that her government is trying to do. She also mentioned the mosaic of her riding, and I too appreciate that, because in my riding of Essex we have a significant German population, Italian and Arabic. So that I should not leave anyone out, we have some 60 nationalities in our riding. That's part of what makes Ontario as great as it is and our country as great as it is.

I do though, since the member from Thornhill spoke about education, want to mention again that there's still so much that we have to do. You may talk about what you think you've done in education. We may not share that same view. But as I pointed out earlier, I attended a meeting at the LaSalle high school for the Windsor-Essex Catholic District School Board. It was a forum on special education; particularly, it was in that area of the intensive support amount grants. Quite frankly, they weren't words of mine, they weren't prompted by anyone, but there were parents there who literally begged for help, whose children had been assessed to have a certain need in special education, but that the support just isn't there. I beg the minister—she's here this evening—to take those parents' words into consideration.

The Acting Speaker: The member from Thornhill in response.

Mrs Molinari: I'd like to thank the member from Sarnia, the member from Timmins-James Bay and the member from Scarborough Centre and the member from Essex for their comments.

Basically relating to the funding for education, prior to the new model it was based on assessment within the riding or within the electoral area where you live. That's an unfair way of funding education. Those who were rich in assessment had more than those who were poor in assessment. The funding model now provides a per pupil allocation and it's funded per pupil rather than on the assessment base. There were many boards across the province that were poor because of their assessment. Toronto was one of the richer boards because of the assessment base with the commercial and industrial that is in downtown Toronto.

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I also want to point out the capital allocation. Prior to this new funding model, capital was allocated to boards by the province, not taking into account the local needs of the community. The way the capital funding model is now, boards are given an allocation on the excess they have in student places, so they have the local autonomy to decide where the schools are built. If schools are closing down in areas, it might be because previous governments gave allocations to areas where they shouldn't have been given. Now the funding model is fair and school boards have the local autonomy to allocate schools in the areas where they see fit, not a government that is distant from the school boards.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

On Monday, October 25, 1999, Ms Mushinski moved, seconded by Mr Tilson, that an humble address be

presented to Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor as follows:

"To the Honourable Hilary M. Weston, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario:

"We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario, now assembled, beg leave to thank Your Honour for the gracious speech Your Honour has addressed to us."

On Tuesday, October 26, 1999, Mr McGuinty moved that the motion for an address in reply to the speech from the throne be amended by adding the following thereto:

"Whereas the throne speech was an empty speech from an arrogant government; and

"Whereas the Harris government clearly wished to avoid taking responsibility for its decisions to double the size of the Premier's office, give 30% raises to its top political staff and shower patronage on the likes of Al McLean by allowing the Legislature to sit only seven days in the first 10 months of this year; and

"Whereas the Harris government failed to signal a new approach, failed to outline a vision for taking Ontario boldly into the new millennium and failed to address the real concerns of Ontario residents; and

"Whereas the throne speech was silent on such important issues as hospital deficits, sky-high tuition, carnage on our highways, gridlock on our streets and homelessness in our communities; and

"Whereas the Harris government is clearly out of touch and its throne speech proved it has the wrong priorities;

"This House profoundly regrets that the Harris government continues to act in such an arrogant manner on an agenda which will continue to cause significant hardship for our youngest, our oldest, our sickest and our least fortunate in society."

On Wednesday, October 27, 1999, Mr Hampton moved that the amendment to the motion for an address in reply to the speech of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor at the opening of the session be amended by striking out all of the words after "Whereas the throne speech" and substituting the following:

"lays out a government agenda that will increase the growing gap between the rich and poor in Ontario, while tightening the squeeze on the middle class; and

"Whereas much of that agenda is supported by an official opposition that is complaining about the tone, rather than the substance, of the government's direction; and

"Whereas the government's policies will continue to enrich the wealthiest in the province while damaging environmental protection, child care, home care, affordable housing, community safety and other areas of primary importance to the people of Ontario; and

"Whereas the protection of the rights of workers and the health and safety of Ontarians on the job will continue to be eroded by the government actions; and

"Whereas the government has repeatedly broken promises to people with disabilities, both to pass an Ontarians with Disabilities Act and to put in place an effective disabilities support program; and

"Whereas working families who are falling farther behind need a government that will address their growing economic insecurity, not funnel more money into the pockets of those who are already well off;

"Therefore, this House regrets that the government has failed to put forward a legislative agenda which deals with the issues of concern to a majority of Ontarians."

The first question to be decided is Mr Hampton's amendment to the amendment to the motion.

All those in favour of Mr Hampton's amendment to the amendment to the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it. Call in the members.

I have a deferral motion:

"Dear Mr Speaker:

"Pursuant to standing order 28(h), I would like to request that the vote on the amendment to the amendment to the address and reply to the speech from the throne be deferred until November 2, 1999. Thank you for the assistance in this matter.

"Sincerely,

"Honourable Frank Klees

"Chief Government Whip"

The vote is accordingly deferred.

It being 9:30 of the clock, this House stands adjourned till 1:30 tomorrow afternoon.

The house adjourned at 2127.

ERRATUM

No.	Page	Column	Line(s)	Should read:
7A	220	1	17	Toby Barrett, Marie Bountrogianni, Ted Chudleigh,

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Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Gary Carr

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Nº 8

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of Ontario**
First Session, 37th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**
Première session, 37^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Tuesday 2 November 1999

Mardi 2 novembre 1999

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 2 November 1999

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 2 novembre 1999

*The House met at 1332.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

COLLÈGE D'ALFRED

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): Ma déclaration aujourd'hui s'adresse au ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales. L'agriculture est la première industrie en importance dans l'est de l'Ontario et la deuxième en importance dans l'ensemble de l'Ontario ; 80 % des agriculteurs de l'est ontarien sont francophones, et nous avons besoin du Collège d'Alfred pour former notre jeunesse et pour nous assurer que nous conservons nos fermes familiales.

Hier soir, j'ai appris de TFO que 1,5 \$ million avait été retranché du financement du Collège d'Alfred. Ce collège ne reçoit que 2,2 \$ millions. Qu'adviendra-t-il du Collège d'Alfred avec ces coupures ?

De même, monsieur le ministre, étiez-vous au courant que le président du conseil d'administration et le directeur de ce collège n'avaient même pas été informés de ce pourparler de votre ministère ?

Va-t-il devoir fermer ses portes ? Il semble que votre gouvernement prépare la fermeture du Collège d'Alfred depuis plus d'un an, mais que vous avez attendu après l'élection pour en faire l'annonce. Ceci est déplorable. Nous ne pouvons accepter cette décision.

Ce collège de réputation internationale, le Collège d'Alfred, est connu et respecté par tous les pays francophones. Qu'allez-vous faire aujourd'hui pour garantir la survie de notre collège francophone ? Est-ce que les francophones de l'Ontario doivent se préparer à perdre encore un autre service ? Avons-nous une quelconque importance, monsieur le ministre ?

PETER KNIPFEL

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey): I rise today to congratulate Peter Knipfel from my riding, Chesley, Ontario. Mr Knipfel is the owner of the Knechtel grocery store and yesterday was elected the chairman of the Canadian Federation of Independent Grocers.

Mr Knipfel is here in the House today.

Mr Knipfel has served on the board for the past seven years and has been involved in the grocery industry for

25 years. He has a very good understanding of the smaller retailers serving rural Canada.

There are more than 4,000 members of the Canadian Federation of Independent Grocers. They represent 30%, or \$17 billion, of Canada's retail food sales. The mission statement of the CFIG is "To further the unique interests of independent and franchised grocers in Canada, through a progressive partnership with retailers, their suppliers and the consumer."

The responsibility Mr Knipfel is assuming is a testament to his commitment and dedication. I am proud that a retail grocer from my constituency has earned the respect and confidence of his peers from across the country.

SYNAGOGUE DESECRATIONS

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I want to respond to a very disturbing report that appeared in the newspapers of the last few days that has to do with the desecration of a Jewish cemetery with anti-Semitic vandalism. Perhaps most disturbing was a Jewish Holocaust memorial.

All of us in the Legislature share the feelings of how reprehensible this act is. It's important that particularly our Jewish community understands that everything will be done to bring the perpetrators before the courts. I'm pleased to see some of our senior police officers here today.

What can we do as individuals? I think it's important to remember, when we hear a joke or we see an act that's inappropriate, that we respond to that instantly.

There are some very good organizations out there: The Harmony Movement will be having its annual banquet this Thursday night, the Urban Alliance on Race Relations, the council of Chinese Canadians. They all do good work. I particularly recognize in the Jewish community the human rights league of the B'Nai Brith as well as the Canadian Jewish Congress. They are relentless in any act of discrimination or racial bias and they respond quickly.

Finally, I would urge the government to reconsider one of the things it has cut from the Ministry of Education: its race relations division. I don't think that's appropriate and I would hope that the government, as well as all of us, will do whatever we possibly can to make certain these acts do not go unpunished.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

1340

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I want to inform the Premier and the members of this government that two schools from the separate school board are closing or are threatened with closure: St Peter and St Lucy. They have been organizing steadily and ferociously against those closures and they're devastated that their two schools would close.

St Lucy is a very healthy, viable building constructed in 1962, but with many renovations that have been done to it. It's inconceivable to me and to them that such a school would close.

St Peter is another healthy building, and if it were to close, there will be no school around it in the centre of the city for miles and miles.

That is a serious problem in my community when schools are closing, because they are the centres of our communities. They are vital to healthy communities. You, as a result of your funding formula, are forcing some of our schools like St Lucy and St Peter to close. I want to tell you that if those two schools close, they hold you, Premier, and your government responsible for that and they will not forget.

FIRST NATIONS VETERANS

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): This past weekend, veterans and military service personnel of the Six Nations Veterans Association celebrated their 50th anniversary. Many dignitaries were involved in the ceremonies—including Phil Fontaine, national chief, Assembly of First Nations, and Jack Frost, Ontario president of the Royal Canadian Legion—ceremonies to honour the traditions kept alive by the veterans' association and to remember fallen comrades.

Native people from both Six Nations and the Mississaugas of the New Credit have a long history of military service for Canada and the United States. Over 300 courageous young men and one courageous young woman volunteered in the First World War and over 40 never returned.

During the First World War, at least 4,000 Indian men volunteered to join the Allied Forces on European battlefields, more than 3,000 Canadian Indians served during the Second World War, and it is estimated that several hundred native people volunteered in Korea. Battalion and regimental histories offer many examples of native courage and achievements. On November 11, and always, we should remember that more than 500 native people gave their lives during these wars and others defending values that were meaningful to all Canadians.

First Nations veterans are proud of their wartime contributions. Cairns and memorials have been erected in prominent locations across Ontario to recognize this.

HAZARDOUS WASTE

Mr John C. Cleary (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): I rise today to put on record my strong opposition to the proposed shipment of MOX nuclear fuel to Chalk River from the cities of Cornwall and Sault Ste Marie.

There is strong opposition in my riding to this ill-conceived plan of Atomic Energy of Canada. As you know, Atomic Energy of Canada Ltd proposed to transport nuclear fuel from Russia up the St Lawrence River to Cornwall, where it will be unloaded from a freighter and then transported through my riding and on to Highway 401.

We have witnessed a 500% increase in the importation of hazardous waste into Ontario in the last five years under Mike Harris and we are rapidly becoming a dumping ground for the United States because of our weak and ineffective regulations regarding the disposal of hazardous waste.

Now we are supposed to be taking in nuclear waste in Ontario, and I'm not just talking about one shipment. We may see trucks carting several tonnes of weapons-grade plutonium over Ontario highways annually in the future if this project goes ahead.

I just want to tell you that all sorts of organizations are also opposed, such as the council of the city of Cornwall, the Mohawk council of Akwesasne, the Police Association of Ontario, the all-party committee of the House of Commons on foreign affairs, the International Association of Fire Fighters, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and the Ontario generation company.

BRAMPTON BATTALION

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton Centre): Today I rise in the House to give the members a progress report on the growing success of the Brampton Battalion, an Ontario Hockey League franchise in my home riding.

This time last year, I informed the members of the beginning of a piece of Brampton sports history when the team hit the ice last October in Brampton's privately owned, newest, state-of-the-art sport and entertainment facility. The Battalion finished its inaugural season recording only eight wins, 57 losses and three ties, but even with this record, several key members showed early signs of talent.

Head coach Stan Butler was named assistant coach of the Canadian world junior team and Battalion defence-men Jay Harrison and Tyler Hanchuck played for Ontario's under-17 team and recently returned from the Four Nations Cup in the Czech Republic with gold medals.

This year, I'm pleased to tell the honourable members the Battalion has moved onward and upward to top spot in the Ontario Hockey League with 26 points in 15

games, two points ahead of the Ottawa 67's, the reigning Canadian Hockey League champions.

This team's impressive beginning in the second season has caught the attention of fans, the national media and NHL personnel.

I extend an invitation to everyone to come and see the Battalion in full military colours, the future stars of the NHL.

CANCER CARE

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): Last Friday in Sault Ste Marie, my leader, Dalton McGuinty, and I met with Dr David Walde, a medical oncologist in the city. Health care professionals are worried that delivery of the services for cancer care that had been promised just prior to the election could be delayed upwards of four years.

Cancer care is a very important issue, one of life and death. Dr. Walde has stated that unless Sault Ste Marie receives immediate help, options such as limiting patient care or turning people away are a possibility. This situation is clearly unacceptable. I call on the Minister of Health to take immediate action so that Sault Ste Marie receives a cancer radiation treatment facility now, not four years down the road.

Minister Witmer, the people of Algoma deserve nothing less than first-rate cancer facilities and care. For the record, in addition to the pleas of local doctors, a petition with in excess of 30,000 names has been forwarded to your attention demanding this cancer care facility.

The Harris government made a promise and a commitment to this needed cancer care centre in Sault Ste Marie. It is time to deliver. The lives of cancer patients and their families depend on this. It is my sincere hope that the government of the day is not playing politics with regard to these delays.

It is clear to all parties involved that the need for the cancer centre is immediate. It is not clear why the Harris government has not carried through with its promise.

SCUGOG CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AWARDS

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): Today I would like to recognize two Scugog business owners who were recently recognized by the Scugog Chamber of Commerce.

I extend my congratulations to Ken Koury of the Nutty Chocolatier, who won business of the year in the category of more than 10 employees.

I would also like to congratulate Dana Smith from Dana's Goldsmithing Inc. Dana won Scugog Chamber of Commerce's business of the year employing fewer than five employees. Dana's business, on Queen Street in Port Perry, specializes in beautiful jewellery design, restoration and repair, as well as carrying other special lines of merchandise. The building Dana's store is located in has

received an award from the Scugog Historical Society for heritage restoration.

As we all know, small businesses like Ken Koury's and Dana Smith's are an important part of the Durham and provincial economies. There are many small business owners in my riding who deserve thanks for their role in creating over 542,000 net new jobs in Ontario since 1995. Our government recognizes the important contribution and service of small business owners like Ken and Dana. We are the government that cut red tape, eliminated waste and duplication and cut taxes 99 times.

Again, I would like to offer my congratulations to Les Gower, president of the Scugog Chamber of Commerce, Ken Koury, Dana Smith, and members of the Scugog and local community for their support of small business in my riding of Durham.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, and I thank the businesses of Durham.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

SAFE STREETS ACT, 1999

LOI DE 1999 SUR LA SÉCURITÉ DANS LES RUES

Mr Flaherty moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 8, An Act to promote safety in Ontario by prohibiting aggressive solicitation, solicitation of persons in certain places and disposal of dangerous things in certain places, and to amend the Highway Traffic Act to regulate certain activities on roadways / Projet de loi 8, Loi visant à promouvoir la sécurité en Ontario en interdisant la sollicitation agressive, la sollicitation de personnes dans certains lieux et le rejet de choses dangereuses dans certains lieux, et modifiant le Code de la route afin de réglementer certaines activités sur la chaussée.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The Attorney General for a short explanation?

Hon Jim Flaherty (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): Mr Speaker, I'll make a minister's statement.

1350

POLICE RECORDS CHECK

BY NON-PROFIT AGENCIES ACT, 1999

LOI DE 1999 SUR LES VÉRIFICATIONS DES DOSSIERS DE POLICE

PAR LES AGENCES SANS BUT LUCRATIF

Mr Kormos moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 9, An Act respecting the cost of checking the police records of individuals who may work for certain non-profit service agencies / Projet de loi 9, Loi concernant les frais de vérification des dossiers de police à

l'égard des particuliers qui pourraient travailler pour certaines agences de services sans but lucratif.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): The bill applies to non-profit agencies, agencies like Big Brothers, Girl Guides of Canada or Boy Scouts of Canada, who are being charged higher and higher user fees to check out and access police records of applicants who want to volunteer with those agencies. The bill would prohibit a police force from charging any amount to provide a police records check to one of these agencies in respect of an individual who is working or volunteering for the agency or who has applied to do so. This is going to make those agencies' access to the backgrounds of those volunteers much more reasonable, and it's going to facilitate volunteers who come forward in good faith but who could well be barred by prohibitive costs.

MOTIONS

STANDING ORDERS REFORM

Hon Frank Klees (Minister without Portfolio): I believe I have unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding some additional amendments to the standing orders.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

Hon Mr Klees: I move that the standing orders of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario be amended as follows:

That the last paragraph in standing order 24(b) be struck out and reinserted as 24(d); and

That the phrase "limited by this clause" be struck out and replaced with the phrase "governed by this standing order";

That standing order 25(e) be struck out;

That standing order 48(b) and (c) be struck out and reinserted into standing order 2 at the end of the definition of "substantive motion";

That in standing order 59(d) the word "recognized" be inserted before the word "party" in the fourth line; and

That the word "sessional" in the first line of standing order 106 be replaced with the word "sitting."

The Speaker: Mr Klees has moved that the standing orders—dispense?

All in favour of the motion? Carried.

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon Frank Klees (Minister without Portfolio): I believe I have unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding this evening's sitting.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

Hon Mr Klees: I move that notwithstanding the order of the House dated November 1, 1999, the House shall not sit this evening.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

SAFE STREETS ACT

Hon Jim Flaherty (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): Our government believes in keeping the promises it makes to the people of Ontario. In the Blueprint, we made a commitment to take action about behaviour that jeopardizes the safe use of the streets.

Last month in the speech from the throne, we reiterated our intention to introduce legislation empowering police to crack down on squeegeeing and aggressive forms of solicitation experienced by many people in Ontario through panhandlers. This is one element of our broad effort to make our towns and cities safer places to live and raise families.

Our government believes that all people in Ontario have the right to drive on the roads, walk down the street or go to public places without being or feeling intimidated. They must be able to carry out their daily activities without fear. When they are not able to do so, it is time for government to act. It is time for government to exercise its responsibility to maintain and protect the ability of Ontario residents to use their streets, sidewalks and parks in a safe and secure manner.

Earlier today, I introduced the Safe Streets Act. The bill, if passed, would regulate conduct that interferes with the safe use of public spaces. It is legislation that responds to the real-life concerns Ontarians have about problems they encounter, such as squeegeeing, aggressive solicitation, soliciting in captive audience situations, and the disposal of dangerous objects in parks, schoolyards and other public places.

Earlier today, I saw and heard first-hand how one neighbourhood is struggling to keep its laneways free of carelessly disposed syringes, needles and other items that endanger health and safety.

Police officers who patrol our streets daily have told me that the activities I have mentioned compromise the safe use of streets in the communities in which the police are charged with the responsibility of serving and protecting. We know that many motorists feel intimidated when people enter the road to offer unwanted services, resulting in a significant safety hazard. I personally have met with business people who say that their employees and customers routinely have difficulty entering stores and offices because the sidewalks are blocked by people who are aggressive in their solicitations. Mayors are hearing calls for action from community residents. As a

result, some municipalities have enacted bylaws to deal with some of the problems.

Some of these concerned people have journeyed to the House today. I would like to acknowledge their presence and thank them for taking the time to attend: Margaret Knowles of the Yonge-Bloor-Bay Association, Acting Chief Boyd, Inspector Randal Munroe and Staff Sergeant Ken Kinsman of the Toronto Police Service.

The Safe Streets Act would create new provincial offences and amend the Highway Traffic Act. It would give certain powers of arrest and the courts a range of sentencing options, including jail for repeat offenders.

Some people say this law is not needed. They expect communities to accept the status quo. They expect communities to accept a diminished quality of life. I say this is unacceptable. I say we are exercising responsible and responsive government. Ontario residents asked us to do something to ensure the safer use of their streets. We have listened and we have introduced the Safe Streets Act. In so doing, we are helping to ensure that Ontario remains the best place to live, work, invest and raise a family.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Responses?

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): We got the name of the act wrong. It should be called the "Let's sweep it under the rug" act. This approach is going to fail. It's doomed to failure.

Last September the minister held a press conference in which he waved a squeegee around in one of the lowest moments in the history of this province's justice department and said, "Mark my words: There'll be no more squeegees in the city of Toronto a year from now." Well, mark my words: The kids will be back.

The reality is that this act attempts to sweep the problem under the rug. There is nothing in this act that is going to do anything more than put them in the revolving door of the criminal justice system. They're going to congratulate themselves when the kids go through the door and hope that none of us notices when everybody is coming right back out and going right back to the streets. You can take a street cleaner down Bloor Street and sweep away the rubbish, but you can't do the same thing with the poverty in the streets of Toronto. These kids are going to come back.

We're going to have to take a good look at the bill, but I can tell you right now from looking at all of its four pages that it fails to learn the lessons of New York City, Vancouver and Montreal, where the important second half of the work has to be done to deal with these people after they're taken off the streets. This is the "Sweep it under the rug" act and, mark my words, it's going to fail.

This government is bent on turning squeegee kids into crowbar and crack kids. Everybody understands that if you take the squeegee out of their hands and give no other alternative, provide no other diversion, all that's going to happen is you're going to be putting a crowbar in their hands and they're going to be coming to a neighbourhood near you soon.

Lastly, the priorities of this government are completely out of whack with the priorities of Ontarians. This government is prioritizing squeegees over stretchers, squeegees over schools. Within the criminal justice portfolio itself, within law and order itself, there are so many more issues we could be dealing with but this is the first one that we're looking at.

It's Holocaust Education Week and hate crimes are going up in Ontario. Is the government doing anything about hate crimes? No. They want to deal with 200-odd squeegee kids.

There's a rise of gangs and organized crime in the province of Ontario. Does this government want to do anything about organized crime? No. The 200-odd squeegee kids.

Proliferation of guns on the streets of our cities. You know what? This government wants to intervene, along with the government of Alberta, to strike down our federal gun control laws.

1400

Interjection: Shame.

Mr Bryant: Shame. This government doesn't want to do anything about guns.

Police and prosecutors tell me that domestic assault has been on the rise over the last few months, and this week in particular it would have been appropriate to bring forth a bill to deal with the mess whereby crowns get files for five minutes before they can assist a victim of domestic assault. Are they going to deal with that? No. They want to crack down on 200-odd squeegee kids.

Deadbeat dads can roam the streets of Ontario without concern. This government committed in 1995 and 1999 to crack down on deadbeat dads, and their great crackdown rate of 1% was reported last month.

Let's just hope the crackdown rate on squeegee kids is more successful. It's not going to be. It's not going to work.

Lastly, the minister was in the riding of Toronto Centre-Rosedale and, in an effort to throw smoke and mirrors at this issue, purported to address the issues of that community. I think the member for Toronto Centre-Rosedale has something to say about that.

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): I say today, shame on the Attorney General. You visited the neighbourhood of Dundas and Seaton Streets today, which has had problems. It's plagued by crack cocaine, not squeegee kids. At 51 division, police resources are pathetic: six drug officers for two downtown divisions.

Minister, you recklessly contribute to class warfare that threatens my riding, yet you offer no new resources to deal with the real problem in that neighbourhood, which is crack cocaine and addiction. You are so out of touch, apparently you need your windscreen cleaned.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): We were expecting a major piece of legislation today and instead we're presented with some fluff that is about as transparent as a clean windshield.

The fact of the matter is this legislation is an embarrassment and it's an insult. It's an embarrassment because there are real crime problems out there in our communities. This legislation will do nothing about it.

This legislation will do nothing about wife assault. This legislation will do nothing about the increasing experience that seniors have of home invasion. This legislation will do nothing about hate crime. This legislation won't even put any more police on the street to deal with those real issues.

Let me tell you how transparent this is. Thank God we still have in Canada something called Statistics Canada. StatsCan has done a study of police officers in the street in Ontario and what they show is that this government has actually cut the number of police officers on the street. In 1994, there were 20,737 police officers in this province. In 1998, there were less: 20,454. When you factor in the growth in population, just to stay equal with 1994 the government would have to have 21,865 police officers on the street, and it's not happening.

Instead, it's this government's priority that the police officers who are out there are going to spend their time chasing after squeegee kids. No effort for wife assault, no effort for hate crime, no effort to deal with home invasion. This government's priority in terms of dealing with crime is to go after 300 or 400 squeegee kids. It is an insult. It is an embarrassment. But even worse, what we see is a government that wants to use the criminal law to go after a social problem. We see young people who want a real job out there trying to make do with squeegeeing to make a few bucks. The government is going to turn the criminal law loose on them. We see people who are homeless, who don't have a home, our evidence of the growing crisis of homelessness in our major cities, and does the government have a solution? No. They're going to turn the criminal law on them.

What a misuse of the criminal law. What a misuse of police resources. What a missed opportunity to do something about the real crime problems in our society and to put together a strategy to deal with some of these social problems. What an embarrassment. What an embarrassment that the Attorney General today had to take six police officers off the beat to go down the street with him so he could have a photo opportunity chasing some squeegee kids. Embarrassment, that's what it is.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): This government has one real twisted point of view about what constitutes crime prevention in our communities. I note that it's either a new or a used hypodermic syringe, but it's only used condoms that constitute a violation. I don't envy the cop who has to testify in court as to the condition of that condom that is going to be discovered.

Didn't you guys understand? A street junkie or a crack addict couldn't care less about a provincial offences ticket as a result of what they did with their used syringe. We've got a serious drug problem in this province and you guys should be standing up, committing yourselves to devoting specific funds to specific police forces in very specific communities to combat drug trafficking and

drug use. That's what's going to solve the problem of syringes being found by kids or other people in public places.

You want to take on squeegee kids? Well, the fact remains that at the end of the day, come winter and salt and snow and slush, I want a squeegee kid at the end of University Avenue before I hit the Gardiner Expressway, and I'm prepared to pay a toonie rather than just a loonie because that kid's out there trying to hustle, trying to keep body and soul together in the hard times that you've helped create.

You want to put squeegee kids in jail? Think about it, Speaker. If they put all the squeegee kids in jail, there won't be any cells left for the cabinet ministers.

This government is trying to divert attention from its incredible mismanagement of law and order and of policing in this province. It's trying to distract attention from its lack of support from crown attorneys and other personnel in the criminal justice system. It's trying to distract attention from its complete failure in the area of corrections, especially youth corrections, and its failure to implement meaningful programs to straighten out young kids who run afoul. This is just another example of trying to steer people away from the real issues. It ain't going to work. You're going to be mocked. It's going to be a subject of laughter.

DEFERRED VOTES

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): We have a deferred vote on the amendment to the amendment to the motion for an address in reply to the speech of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor at the opening of the session. This will be a five-minute bell. Call in the members.

The division bells rang from 1408 to 1414.

The Speaker: All those in favour of Mr Hampton's amendment to the amendment to the motion will please rise.

Ayes

Agostino, Dominic	Cordiano, Joseph	Levac, David
Bartolucci, Rick	Crozier, Bruce	Marchese, Rosario
Bisson, Gilles	Curling, Alvin	Martin, Tony
Bountrogianni, Marie	Di Cocco, Caroline	McGuinty, Dalton
Boyer, Claudette	Dombrowsky, Leona	McLeod, Lyn
Bradley, James J.	Duncan, Dwight	Parsons, Ernie
Brown, Michael A.	Gerretsen, John	Patten, Richard
Bryant, Michael	Hampton, Howard	Peters, Steve
Caplan, David	Hoy, Pat	Phillips, Gerry
Christopherson, David	Kormos, Peter	Ramsay, David
Churley, Marilyn	Kwinter, Monte	Ruprecht, Tony
Cleary, John C.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Sergio, Mario
Colle, Mike	Lankin, Frances	Smitherman, George
Conway, Sean G.		

The Speaker: All those opposed to the amendment to the amendment to the motion will please rise.

Nays	
Arnott, Ted	Hodgson, Chris
Baird, John R.	Hudak, Tim
Barrett, Toby	Jackson, Cameron
Beaubien, Marcel	Johns, Helen
Chudleigh, Ted	Johnson, Bert
Clark, Brad	Kells, Morley
Clement, Tony	Klees, Frank
Coburn, Brian	Marland, Margaret
Cunningham, Dianne	Martiniuk, Gerry
DeFaria, Carl	Maves, Bart
Dunlop, Garfield	Mazzilli, Frank
Ecker, Janet	Molinari, Tina R.
Eves, Ernie L.	Munro, Julia
Flaherty, Jim	Murdoch, Bill
Galt, Doug	Mushinski, Marilyn
Gill, Raminder	Newman, Dan
Hardeman, Ernie	O'Toole, John
Harris, Michael D.	Young, David

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 40; the nays are 52.

The Speaker: I declare the amendment to the amendment to the motion lost.

The next question to be decided is Mr McGuinty's amendment to the motion.

All those in favour of Mr McGuinty's amendment to the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1418 to 1423.

The Speaker: All those in favour of Mr McGuinty's amendment to the motion will please rise.

Ayes	
Agostino, Dominic	Cordiano, Joseph
Bartolucci, Rick	Crozier, Bruce
Bisson, Gilles	Curling, Alvin
Bountrogianni, Marie	Di Cocco, Caroline
Boyer, Claudette	Dombrowsky, Leona
Bradley, James J.	Duncan, Dwight
Brown, Michael A.	Gerritsen, John
Bryant, Michael	Hampton, Howard
Caplan, David	Hoy, Pat
Christopherson, David	Kennedy, Gerard
Churley, Marilyn	Kormos, Peter
Cleary, John C.	Kwinter, Monte
Colle, Mike	Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Conway, Sean G.	Lankin, Frances
	Levac, David
	Marchese, Rosario
	McGuinity, Dalton
	McLeod, Lyn
	Parsons, Ernie
	Patten, Richard
	Peters, Steve
	Phillips, Gerry
	Ramsay, David
	Ruprecht, Tony
	Sergio, Mario
	Smitherman, George

The Speaker: All those opposed to the amendment to the motion will please rise.

Nays	
Arnott, Ted	Hodgson, Chris
Baird, John R.	Hudak, Tim
Barrett, Toby	Jackson, Cameron
Beaubien, Marcel	Johns, Helen
Chudleigh, Ted	Johnson, Bert
Clark, Brad	Kells, Morley
Clement, Tony	Klees, Frank
Coburn, Brian	Marland, Margaret
Cunningham, Dianne	Martiniuk, Gerry
DeFaria, Carl	Maves, Bart
Dunlop, Garfield	Mazzilli, Frank
Ecker, Janet	Molinari, Tina R.
Eves, Ernie L.	Munro, Julia
Flaherty, Jim	Murdoch, Bill
	Ouellette, Jerry J.
	Sampson, Rob
	Skarica, Toni
	Snobelen, John
	Spina, Joseph
	Sterling, Norman W.
	Stewart, R. Gary
	Stockwell, Chris
	Tascona, Joseph N.
	Tilson, David
	Tsubouchi, David H.
	Turnbull, David
	Wettlaufer, Wayne
	Wilson, Jim

Galt, Doug	Mushinski, Marilyn
Gill, Raminder	Newman, Dan
Hardeman, Ernie	O'Toole, John
Harris, Michael D.	Wood, Bob

Clerk of the House: The ayes are 40; the nays are 52.

The Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

We now come to the motion of Mrs Mushinski.

All those in favour of Mrs Mushinski's motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

I declare the motion carried.

It is therefore resolved that an humble address be presented to Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor as follows:

To the Honourable Hilary M. Weston, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario:

We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario, now assembled, beg leave to thank Your Honour for the gracious speech Your Honour has addressed to us.

ORAL QUESTIONS

MINISTER'S RESIGNATION

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition):

My question is for the Premier. The subject I want to deal with today has to do with the most aggressive panhandling we've ever witnessed in the province of Ontario, and that's the Steve Gilchrist "Buddy, can you spare \$25,000" approach to public policy.

On September 30, the assistant Deputy Attorney General—that's the highest civil servant in the province responsible for criminal law—decided that accusations against Mr Gilchrist and his lawyer were so serious that they should be immediately turned over to the OPP for a full police investigation.

Premier, you knew this on September 30, yet you decided to say nothing about either the accusations or the fact that a member of your cabinet was under police investigation until after word leaked out on October 8. That was a full nine days later. Can you explain to us why you decided to cover up the fact that one of your ministers was under police investigation for a full nine days before you disclosed this to the public?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I think we have come forward with the information pretty directly and pretty forthrightly. What was determined by the assistant Deputy Attorney General was that the allegations, if substantiated, if true, were quite serious. The decision was made to call in the OPP to see if these allegations were true, could be substantiated. I think that was the correct course of action and we are awaiting that report.

Mr McGuinty: That wasn't the question. The question was, why did you hide this fact from the Ontario public for nine days?

I can tell you what the Ontario public thinks. They are entitled to assume that no member of your cabinet today is under police investigation, and with that assumption comes the legitimate expectation that should that change, you will immediately put them on notice. You will stand up and make sure that Ontarians understand that "yes, there's somebody today in my cabinet who's under police investigation, so I've asked them to resign, at least pending the outcome of that investigation."

What you did was cover up the matter. In the context of the fact that you are a Premier and we're dealing with the cabinet and you lead a government, this is a political cover-up, Premier. That's what it's all about. You knew the allegation involved a plot regarding \$25,000 to be extracted from developers. You knew that there was a minister who was under investigation by the police. Again I ask you, why did you deny this fact from the Ontario public for a full nine days?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I would first of all say to the members of this House, and I would caution members opposite, you are throwing about allegations that you think maybe are true or maybe somebody has said. I have no knowledge of that.

Secondly, I can tell you that, to the best of my knowledge, the minister is not under investigation. If a minister of my cabinet is under police investigation, I have asked him to step aside. What is under investigation is: Is there any truth to these allegations? If, in fact, there is truth to the allegations, I made it very clear I would ask the minister to step aside.

1430

Mr McGuinty: You knew for a full nine days that this matter, no matter how you dice it or slice it, was the subject of a police investigation, and you decided that you were not going to inform the Ontario public. You weren't going to inform voters that somebody in your cabinet was facing some very, very serious allegations. You kept this matter secret. You hid this from the Ontario public. You covered it up.

If it was not for the fact that this matter was leaked to the media, we here still today would not have been apprised of the fact that your minister continues to face some very, very serious allegations.

That's why, Premier, we are asking that you hold a full public inquiry so that we can get to the bottom of this growing scandal in our province. Will you do that, Premier?

Hon Mr Harris: It's very clear that the difference between you and me is I wait to make sure something is substantiated first. I have no substantiation to date. What I have is a verbal allegation that I have been unable to verify and my office was unable to verify. We asked for assistance to verify that. You, on the other hand, are quite quick to condemn people on the basis of no evidence at all. I would suggest to you that this is most inappropriate.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): New question.

Mr McGuinty: My question is for the Premier. We're not talking about something here on your behalf that was inappropriate; we're talking about something that was

nothing short of scandalous. You had information that a member of your cabinet was the subject of a very, very serious allegation. You knew that the Attorney General had referred this matter to the Ontario Provincial Police for them to conduct an investigation. For nine days, you kept that matter secret. You refused to disclose it to the Ontario public. That's what you did.

Premier, tell us, why is it that you continually put the interests of your friends and your cabinet ministers ahead of the Ontario public interest?

Hon Mr Harris: Clearly, the actions that we have taken (a) have followed the protocol laid out by the government and (b) suggest that we put the truth ahead of all else, something that the party of the member opposite has had great difficulty doing over their political career.

Mr McGuinty: The Premier is still covering up for his friends. That's exactly why we need a public inquiry.

Let's review the latest. Every day we've got some new information and the sleaze factor jumps just a little bit higher. Today we discover that John Snobelen, another member of your cabinet, knew as well about these allegations. On the weekend, we found out that David Lindsay in your office also knew about these allegations. There are reports that at least two other senior government officials knew about these allegations. The switchboard in your office was lighting up like a Christmas tree with people phoning in and complaining about this matter and this cabinet minister.

Come clean, Premier. Who knew what, when, and why didn't you disclose it?

Hon Mr Harris: I think we've laid out very precisely who knew what. I'm not sure you know anything yet. You seem to think you do. But all I know is there was a verbal allegation, over the phone. My office dealt with it immediately—in fact, before even notifying me. When they notified me they said, "Premier, we've referred it to the Deputy Attorney General," as is the protocol. We need to determine if there's anything factual to it. That doesn't stop you from raising it. I understand that. It never has; it never will.

Mr McGuinty: You can hide behind your protocol, but let me tell you about your responsibility to the people of Ontario. When a cabinet minister is the subject of these kinds of very, very serious allegations, when this matter is referred by somebody in the Attorney General's office to the Ontario Provincial Police, when the Ontario Provincial Police are conducting an investigation into this matter, you, sir, have the responsibility as leader of the government and Premier of Ontario to disclose this to the Ontario public and not conduct a cover-up. That's your job. That's what you're supposed to do. Either come clean on exactly what went down in your office or agree here and now to conduct a public inquiry.

Hon Mr Harris: Everything that's been done in my office is a matter I think of record, and we've told you all that. We do await the facts before we make judgments. That little difference between you and Liberals and Conservatives is probably why next year we'll go into this booming economy with a balanced budget; it's probably

why we have all these jobs created in the province; it's probably why we now have new higher standards in education; it's probably why we now have a revitalized and a reformed health care system, because we do check the facts before we act.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): On a point of order, Mr Speaker, related to standing order 39(a): Reference to the protocol has again twice been made today. The minister opposite indicated that that's everyone's protocol. It's not everyone's protocol. We are not in possession of the protocol. Again I urge you to use your chair to protect the opposition's ability to question the government. Will you please intervene and ask the government to table its protocol.

The Speaker: This is the same point of order as yesterday. As I explained to him yesterday, the rules are that you are not allowed to quote at length. The Premier did not do that. He simply referred to it briefly, so it's not a point of order.

Mr Duncan: Speaker, I would suggest to you that that protocol has been referenced on so many occasions that by not asking the government to table it, you, sir, are not allowing the opposition its ability, it's rightful role to question the government on a very serious cover-up.

The Speaker: The member take his seat. I have ruled as I did yesterday: It is not a point of order.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): On a point of order, Speaker: I thought I saw you direct the table that the clock be stopped. You know the importance of that. It didn't stop, sir.

The Speaker: Yes, it did.

Mr Christopherson: No, it didn't.

The Speaker I apologize. The table did not see me. I did say, "Stop the clock," and the table didn't see it. They're going to put a minute back on the clock.

Mr Christopherson: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: New question.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of the Environment. I want to take the Minister of the Environment back to his responses earlier in the week. When we questioned him about his letter on behalf of a developer friend, he said he was simply pointing out that "he act within the class EA regulations and the law."

This is a report from the planning commissioner of Durham region. The report is about your developer friend Jay-M Holdings and its plan to put 2,500 units of housing on the Oak Ridges moraine, the plan that you wrote to Durham region about. The report is scathing. It finds your developer friend's application to be bad for the environment, bad for urban planning and bad for economics. But what is most striking is their response to your letter. Their view is that under the Environmental Assessment Act it isn't legal for them to do what you suggest, that they can't do it.

Minister, would you table the legal advice that you relied upon when you wrote to them advising them of the law and the Environmental Assessment Act?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of the Environment, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I would say to the honourable member that in the first instance the issue is to be determined by the organization in the municipality that you refer to so that they have the opportunity to review their practices. They did so and they came up with that decision and that's their right to do so.

1440

Mr Hampton: That's not what you said last week. What you said last week is that your letter "requests that, in his due deliberations as regional chair, he act within the class EA regulations and the law," and then you point out what your developer friend wants and you point out that your developer friend can be accommodated.

If you read this planning report, they say, "The request by Jay-M Holdings Ltd to extend the York-Durham sewer system to Uxbridge cannot be considered by way of reopening the class EA and by the preparation of an addendum to the original EA, but rather, under the act, it must be considered a new undertaking"—in other words, a new EA.

Minister, not only do the planning staff oppose the suggestion that you make in your letter, but they can't legally do it. They just can't do it.

I ask you again, Minister: They've looked at the act; they've gotten legal advice. Show us the legal advice you relied on before you went out there and wrote that letter on behalf of your developer friend.

Hon Mr Clement: Two things: Just for the record, I disagree with the honourable member's characterization, but I would say to him that there is no discordance between what I wrote and the deliberations. I said merely "take into account in your deliberations." They took it into account. They deliberated. They came up with an answer. There's nothing wrong with that at all.

Mr Hampton: No, Minister. What you said in this House is that you were informing them about the law. That was your whole line of defence for getting cced on a letter from a developer and then taking that cc and writing a very explicit letter to the municipal officials in Durham region. You said you were informing them of the law. Well, they've sat down and they've looked at the Environmental Assessment Act and they are very clear that it would be illegal for them to take the line that you suggested. It would be contrary to the Environmental Assessment Act for them to act in that way and to favour your developer friend.

What I'm asking you is very simple: Table here, so people can see it, the legal advice that you relied upon before you wrote the letter supposedly instructing Durham region as to your version of the law. Will you do that? Will you show us what you relied upon before you went out there and interfered in this decision and instructed this municipality that they should in fact

breach the Environmental Assessment Act in order to favour your developer friend?

Hon Mr Clement: For the benefit of all honourable members, the law is quite clear. Any significant modification has to be reviewed by the proponent. The proponent reviewed the case and made their decision, and I'm satisfied with the decision.

SPORTS FACILITY TAXATION

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My next question is for the Premier. It concerns your government's desire to use taxpayers' funds to subsidize professional hockey teams.

Your Minister of Finance presented on Thursday a strategy whereby your government is going to potentially subsidize two professional hockey teams in this province to the tune of \$16 million.

I know you have the support of the Liberal Party on this. They believe this should be a priority for Ontario.

Why is subsidizing professional hockey teams more important than, for example, dealing with the problems in our health care system or dealing with second-stage housing for assaulted women or dealing with the issues of homelessness? Premier, why is giving \$16 million to millionaire hockey players more important than looking after these very important issues for a majority of people in Ontario?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I think you would know we have been very clear that there would be no direct subsidy of NHL teams, the same as other businesses, from the province of Ontario.

What the Minister of Finance did offer, however, was to private sector owners of arena facilities, who may or may not be the same people who are involved with professional sports. Where instead of using taxpayer dollars to build the arena, a municipality had opted to have a private sector consortium or individual or company build those facilities, the Minister of Finance has offered to the municipalities an opportunity to allow those to be at the same tax basis as those facilities, for example, that were owned by the municipalities themselves. That is the proposal that is there, and we'll see if municipalities wish to avail themselves of it.

Mr Hampton: Premier, let's be very clear. Maple Leaf Gardens, what is now the Air Canada Centre, the Toronto Maple Leafs, you're going to offer them an \$8-million subsidy. You're going to offer the Ottawa Senators an \$8-million subsidy. Some of that money is going to come out of your education tax; some of it is going to come out of municipalities.

Meanwhile, you don't seem to have money to help, for example, the Gallaher paper mill in Thorold restructure itself and reposition itself so that 300 jobs can be preserved.

I want to quote for you Glen Murray, the mayor of Winnipeg, who says: "We started out subsidizing the Winnipeg Jets to \$2 million a year. Then they came back and they wanted \$20 million a year. The last year here,

they asked for \$50 million. Then they went to Phoenix. Now they want the city of Phoenix to build them a brand-new arena at taxpayers' expense."

Why, Premier, do you have money for millionaire hockey players, but none for the health care system, the school system, the situation with respect to the homeless or people—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Premier.

Hon Mr Harris: I'm still awaiting the briefing note from the Liberal Party on Windsor. When I get that and when you ask the question next time, I'll have it about how you gave property tax concessions to, I guess—

Interjection: A casino.

Hon Mr Harris: A casino, I suppose it was. I may not have it accurate; I'm still waiting for the full note. But let me be very clear: We are spending over \$20 billion in health care. We are spending a hundred times more dollars than the federal government on homelessness, although they do have a minister with no money; that's the Liberal way, I think you know.

In the case of arenas, public facilities that are owned by municipalities, if they ought to have the private sector builder own them, this now gives them the option of putting those owners of those facilities on a level playing field with municipally owned facilities. Quite frankly, the way I would expect it would be done would be by municipalities spreading that cost, if there is a cost, over all the commercial and industrial taxpayers. That would be a business decision that would be made on behalf of businesses—

The Speaker: Premier, order. New question.

MEMBER'S COMMENTS

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): My question is to the Premier. I want to ask you about comments made by your member from Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant with regard to restructuring.

His father was quoted as saying that residents in Haldimand are "conservative in their spending" and "rooted in British tradition," while those in Norfolk are "European immigrants" and "peasant stock" who "borrow heavily" and "expect a substantial profit."

The member had the opportunity to clarify this, and what did he say? To quote the member, Toby Barrett: "There are very significant differences" between the two sides of the region, "and the regional census would show that.... There is census data and facts out there. There's so many differences between the two counties and part of that is that it all derives from the soil structure. Haldimand is clay and Norfolk is sandy. It really has had an influence on the makeup" of the citizens.

Premier, what we're now having is the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of the Environment, who is now also in charge of municipal affairs, suggesting that restructuring Haldimand-Norfolk be based on ethnic backgrounds. Do you agree with that? If you don't, what steps have you taken?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I think the member's comments do not by any interpretation and certainly do not in any way reflect a view that I or this government share. I'm happy to clarify that and make it very clear.

Mr Agostino: I appreciate that. As Premier, you now have to take steps, I believe, to rectify the situation.

He didn't stop there. Further comment in today's Toronto Star: "There is no question that there has been an invisible [ethnic] boundary within the two counties 25 years ago there was a forced marriage and it just didn't work out." The Mayor of Delhi says, regarding these comments that this "is scraping the bottom of the barrel." The Mayor of Nanticoke says, "People's [ethnic] makeup should not be used. I wouldn't want Mr Farrow to say we can't have Germans, Poles and Hungarians together with United Empire Loyalists."

Premier, I agree with you that these comments are inappropriate. These offensive, discriminatory insults involve residents across the province. Will you today take the responsible act and fire the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of the Environment?

Hon Mr Harris: I want members of this Legislature and the public to be very clear about what we are doing in reforming local administration. We're doing so to cut down the size of government. We're doing so to reduce the number of politicians. We're doing so to find savings which will then be passed on to the taxpayers through property tax cuts or through improved services.

I want to say this to you: Any suggestions to the contrary would be inaccurate, and any suggestion of any other motivation is false.

1450

INFLUENZA VACCINE

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): My question is directed to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. There are many seniors in Northumberland who are concerned, with this winter season coming on, that they will not receive their flu shots.

It is my understanding that in Northumberland the influenza vaccine has been distributed to family physicians. As you are aware, there are several residents, particularly in the Campbellford-Seymour area, who do not have access to a family physician. Minister, could you please tell the House what your ministry is doing to help people across the province, especially seniors, have access to flu shots in this upcoming winter season?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I'd like the member to know that we're certainly aware of the concern that's been expressed. In order to fully maximize the allocation of the flu vaccine in the three counties he has talked about, it is the plan of the health unit to collect the surplus vaccines from physicians and then to establish a vaccination clinic where vaccinations will be provided free of charge to those who are eligible. There will be an advertising campaign to ensure that all of those seniors who require

and want the vaccination will have access to that. Those clinics will all occur at the end of November.

Mr Galt: Thank you for your answer and the encouragement. As you are aware, influenza is indeed a very significant problem, particularly with our seniors—a condition which can lead to all kinds of complications and the development of more serious diseases. It can also be spread from workers with seniors to our senior population. In Northumberland there is certainly an aging population and this vaccine is most important to our seniors.

Minister, could you explain to us how this immunization program fits with other immunization programs for our seniors?

Hon Mrs Witmer: Our government is very committed to ensuring that everyone who is eligible has access to the vaccine, so this year we have purchased an additional 200,000 doses of the vaccine. We have an opportunity to purchase an additional 10%.

We are making sure that we expand the eligibility criteria this year. All staff who have the potential for acquiring or transmitting influenza during the course of their work this year are eligible for vaccination. This includes those working in homes for the aged, nursing homes, chronic care facilities and units. We've also made all staff eligible in retirement homes where care is provided as well. It certainly is the intention of the ministry to ensure that all those who work with patients have access to the vaccine.

LITHOTRIPSY

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): I have a question for the Minister of Health. I want to return to the issue of the lithotripter which is presently found in crates in a hospital in Ottawa, bought and paid for by the fundraising efforts of the people of that community and which you refuse to fund for its operating costs.

Yesterday, you effectively said that it was no concern to you that these people who need lithotripsy treatment are forced to travel at their own expense and to pay for their accommodation.

Let's just take a look at the economic side of this argument. Some 340 people at present are travelling to Toronto or London; 225 are going to Montreal. When they go to Montreal, because of an agreement your government entered into with the province of Quebec, we pay \$1,060 for a lithotripsy treatment, whereas we pay \$457 for lithotripsy treatment here in Ontario. Some 300 patients are treated by surgery at the Ottawa Hospital because they cannot travel.

In short, my question is the following: Why is it that taxpayers of Ontario are today paying \$805,880 as a result of not having a lithotripsy treatment centre in Ottawa, whereas otherwise, if we had the damned machine in Ottawa, we would be paying less than \$400,000?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): The member might be well advised to review some of the situations that occurred when your government was in power, regarding this particular issue.

In response to the question that has been asked, I will indicate one more time that we continue to be in discussion with the hospital in Ottawa. We have indicated that we do support the principle. I made that abundantly clear yesterday. We do support the development. It's also important to point out that the waiting list has not increased in this province since 1996; all urgent cases are responded to within 48 hours.

Mr McGuinty: I ask that the Premier pay some attention to this very important issue for the people of Ottawa-Carleton. The people of Ottawa-Carleton bought and paid for a lithotripter. They did that because they were given a written promise by this minister that she would fund its operating costs. At the present time, there are hundreds and hundreds of people who must travel to Montreal, London or Toronto for their treatments. Premier, this is not politically sustainable.

Minister, please stand up and tell us that the bureaucrats are in error; they don't understand that when it comes to health care there is more here than simply considerations related to efficiency. We're talking about the basic emotional and health care needs of people living in a particular community. Can you please do what is right in the circumstances and tell us that you are going to fund the operating costs of this machine for the people of Ottawa-Carleton?

Hon Mrs Witmer: I think the member opposite would be wise to consider the tremendous commitment that our government has made to increasing health care funding in the province of Ontario. In fact, we are funding health care to the tune of \$20.6 billion. It is the highest level of funding at any time in the history of this province.

If we take a look at Ottawa, we have increased funding to the Ottawa-Carleton area by over \$259 million since 1995. We have introduced two new MRIs; we have a new dialysis centre. We have taken steps that were totally different to what any other government has done at any time, and we will continue to ensure that the services that are needed are provided for the people in the community.

HIGHWAY SIGNS

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): My question is for the Minister of Tourism. Inadequate highway signage has long been a problem for Ontario tourism destinations. They need highway visibility in order to ensure tourists can be directed from our now excellent Ontario highways to their businesses.

Some tourist businesses in Niagara Falls have been experiencing delays in obtaining these signs under the program operated by the Ministry of Tourism. One of my constituents wrote to you some time ago and said that there is not one satisfied hotel owner in Niagara Falls

because of the way TODS has handled the area signage. Can you tell me what you are doing to help these businesses successfully market their product to the travelling public?

Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister of Tourism): I want to thank the member for his question and remind members in the House that tourism is the fastest-growing industry in the world and it accounts for about \$13 billion worth of economic activity in our province. We're very proud of the fact that the tourism-oriented destination sign program was brought in by our government in late 1996. It replaces an outdated program that really hadn't had any work done on it since the early 1980s. Part of this program stipulates very clearly, though, that the highway signs will not be installed unless there is a municipal agreement to put in place trailblazer signs or directional signs within the community. Unfortunately, there are just a few communities left in Ontario, Niagara Falls being one of them, Halton region being another, and a couple of others, that have not implemented the program.

The other reason that some of these signs aren't going up is because of highway construction; we won't put a sign up in order to take it down. The fact of the matter is that this government is spending more than \$700 million on highway construction, the most in Ontario's history, which is more than double the amount the Liberals ever spent on highway construction in the province.

1500

Mr Maves: Minister, it is my understanding, in speaking with my colleagues, that individual tourist operators across the province have been experiencing a variety of difficulties with this program. Can you tell me what your ministry is doing to resolve these problems on behalf of my constituents and those around the province?

Hon Mr Jackson: I've had a couple of meetings with the Canadian TODS corporation. We've been reviewing the files and we're very pleased with the progress this program has made. There are 2,700 Ontario tourist operators who have signs on Ontario highways. They in turn have got about 7,500 panels promoting their operations. These monthly meetings I have with TODS is an opportunity to review each and every case. I know I have a couple from the opposition members. I have undertaken a full review of this program and I meet with TODS on a monthly basis in order to resolve those issues. I encourage any members to write me with any of their concerns.

Clearly, this is a leading-edge program promoting tourism, the fastest-growing industry in our province, and this government is to be commended for putting in place this program.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I wish to advise you of my dissatisfaction with the response of the Premier in regard to comments made by Toby Barrett, the member from Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant. The reason for my dissatis-

faction is the Premier did not satisfactorily answer the question. I would like to ask for a late show.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Would you file that with the table.

TENANT PROTECTION

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): My question is to the Premier. Premier, I need your help. I'm not going to be asking for much. You've got to listen to the question before you try to help me out.

The Centre for Equality Rights in Accommodation has documented some serious problems with the Tenant Protection Act. What we're seeing is that tenants are being evicted helter-skelter. In fact, in many cases evictions are downright fraudulent. The evictions forms are unclear, some are never delivered and tenants only have five days to file a written dispute. This, Premier, is where I'm asking for your help because you can do this without introducing any new bill. Can you ensure that the tribunal, not the landlord, gives the tenant notice of eviction? It's a simple request. Can you do it?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I think the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing can answer this.

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of the Environment, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I thank the honourable member for the question. Indeed, the issue has been raised by the early intervention project. We have an interim report which I think the honourable member referred to. I would say to this House that it is only an interim study to date. We're awaiting the final study. We take the recommendation seriously. The only other thing I would say is that the report that the honourable member refers to only refers to one area in Toronto. It's not province-wide. Once we have some more fulsome recommendations and a more fulsome study—it is something we take very seriously.

Mr Marchese: I'm glad you're taking it very seriously. Obviously this is an interim report. It can only get worse, not better. All I asked was for the Premier, now you, Minister, to make a change that is within your control. I know you're the non-government government, but you can do this; you're in charge. This is only one simple request that I ask of you and that the Centre for Equality is asking of you. We'll see whether or not you can deal with another request that I'm about to propose to you. Otherwise you're leaving tenants powerless and in the hands of some landlord sharks. In fact, many of these people are being evicted and are on the streets, adding to the numbers of homeless.

The other matter is that the tenants are finding that Rent Check, which is the private sector credit check company, records them as having been evicted even when evictions are not carried out. That has a devastating and totally unfair impact on tenants. No landlord will rent to you if that remains the case.

Minister, will you make sure that the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal removes all tenants who are not actually evicted from its records so tenants aren't unfairly put

on a blacklist? It's within your control. I hope you can at least deliver on that.

Hon Mr Clement: I thank the honourable member for his input and would advise him in the House that we are taking this review very seriously. The tribunal is going through a review. We want to see what the outcome of that review is. We thank him for his input.

I would say to the honourable member that the grounds for eviction have not changed. They were the same under previous legislation as they are under present legislation. The number of applications for writs of possession are essentially the same, but we are trying to do things better. We're trying to deliver better services for less to the taxpayer and we would take, certainly, the recommendations once they are finalized under advisement.

HYDRO RATES

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): My question is to the Minister of Finance. It's almost a year ago that this Legislature passed the so-called Energy Competition Act, Bill 35, which is supposed to deregulate the electricity marketplace in this province. That legislation gives to the Minister of Finance very considerable responsibilities in this very important electricity marketplace.

My question to the Minister of Finance today is a very straightforward one. Bill 35 made it plain that electricity rates in Ontario were going to come down, so my question today for the Minister of Finance is simply this: Will the Minister of Finance, as a key player in this policy, tell the average residential and farm consumer of electricity when and by how much their electricity bill will come down?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): I don't believe Bill 35 said that at all. What is happening in Ontario is that hydro rates have been frozen since 1995; they continue to be frozen. That is a policy of the government. It's a commitment that the government has made. I believe what the honourable member is alluding to is that we indicated competition surely would be the best way of keeping prices down.

Mr Conway: My question remains the same. The bill was so cleverly named. Let me read the bill: "Bill 35, An Act to create jobs and protect consumers by promoting low-cost energy through competition...." I sat through I think all of the hearings, and the advertisement from the Harris government with respect to this policy was plain: "We're going to give you competition in the electricity marketplace and through that mechanism we're going to bring your electricity bills down."

The Minister of Finance has very significant responsibilities and decision-making authority under Bill 35. Will he tell the House today, and will he tell the average residential and farm consumer of electricity how, when and by how much their electricity bills will be coming down?

Hon Mr Eves: I listened very intently to what the member just read from Bill 35, and he said "low-cost

energy through competition." It doesn't say that your rate will go down. However, we happen—

Interjections.

Hon Mr Eves: Just a minute.

Interjections.

Hon Mr Eves: Mr Speaker, perhaps they missed their feeding time over there this afternoon.

The bill says exactly what it means: This is the best way to keep energy prices down, through competition. I might have a question—would the honourable member be permitted to answer it in question period—as to why he and his party voted for Bill 35 if they think it's such a bad idea.

Mr Conway: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I think it is important. What the member has asked—on a point of privilege. If he checks the journals and the records, it will be made plain that after all of the evidence was in, we voted against Bill 35.

1510

RED HILL CREEK EXPRESSWAY

Mr Brad Clark (Stoney Creek): My question is for the Minister of Transportation. As you are aware, the construction of the Red Hill Creek Expressway will represent the completion of a vital transportation link in Stoney Creek and a harbinger of increased economic development throughout Hamilton-Wentworth.

It is unfortunate that the federal Liberal MPs in the area disagree with this and have used their power to block the expressway with yet another study. It is even more unfortunate that their provincial cousins don't dare criticize this delay with the same kind of outrage they can summon against us on the government side.

As for the NDP, they used their term in office to cut the funding for the expressway.

Minister, what has this government done to ensure that this vital transportation link gets built after four decades of demand?

Hon David Turnbull (Minister of Transportation): I'd like to thank my colleague the member for Stoney Creek and congratulate him on his leadership on this issue.

Some months ago, my colleague the Minister of the Environment and I wrote a joint letter to the federal Minister of the Environment expressing our concerns and asked for reconsideration of their position. We believe that it is inconceivable that the federal panel review is going to provide any new information or insight on this matter.

The government of Ontario is seeking intervenor status in the Hamilton-Wentworth court challenge on this matter. The federal environmental review is too broad in its scope, in our view. We should not be covering the need for the Red Hill Creek or alternatives to the Red Hill Creek.

To date, there have been 61 studies—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Minister, time.

Mr Clark: A lot of people in Hamilton-Wentworth will be pleased with your answer. That would include the region of Hamilton-Wentworth itself, which has taken action against the Liberal roadblocks. They should be applauded for their efforts.

Minister, how is this government assisting the region of Hamilton-Wentworth in this important project?

Hon Mr Turnbull: There have been 61 studies to date on this matter. We believe it's time that Hamilton be allowed to get moving forward on this. We continue to support the project, with \$106.76 million for the expressway and \$25 million for the intersection at the QEW. We have demonstrated our commitment to the transportation infrastructure, as we continue to in this province, with the highest budget in provincial history. This is more than any other government has done. We will continue to support the people of Hamilton-Wentworth.

STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): I have a question to the Minister of Education. Minister, I use that term advisedly because your fumbling has taken away education. Some of your members opposite are making noise. It is the same members who refuse to stand up for the people in their areas. Last week, it was Hamilton. You turned your back on the special needs kids in Hamilton. We forced you to hold a meeting and you still haven't done anything for 550 kids there.

Today I want to ask you specifically about the Grand Erie board. They have had to cannibalize their other programs or other operations to fund 150 kids and they have 60 kids on a waiting list. I want to know, when the supervisors of education in this province say that you've made a mess of special education funding, that you're not acting quickly enough, that it is your responsibility, will you stop whining about school boards? Will you, today, give these kids the education they deserve? Will you promise that here and now?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education): I really hope that the Hamilton board doesn't take their political advice from the member opposite, because it's not going to be of assistance to them as they meet with ministry officials to sort out what they are doing with the increased special education funding they've received from the ministry.

We recognize that the way special education was previously supported in the province was not correct. That's why we gave boards more money when they asked for it. That's why we changed the funding formula so it did have flexibility and it was tied to students who had special needs. We are continuing to meet with boards to discuss how we can change and improve this funding so that they can meet their responsibility to give these children the supports they need.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Supplementary.

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): This is a problem across the province. You have a letter from the Greater Essex

County District School Board on the issue of special education and intensive support. In that letter the board states that Windsor-Essex has a high incidence of children with special needs.

One of my constituents, Denise Dupis, is very concerned about this problem. Her 11-year-old son, Bobby, is severely visually impaired. In this past year, Bobby's sight deteriorated from 20/200 to 20/800. He also suffers from severe sensitivity to light. Unfortunately, despite Mrs Dupis's best efforts, the medical report was not completed in time to qualify for funding to assist Bobby at school. The Dupis family is trying desperately to keep him in school and now may have to remove him from school.

Boards can't make up these funding shortfalls. You've frozen the intensive support funding. What choice are you giving families like the Dupis family? Is it your message that there's no room in the school system for children with intensive support needs? Don't you treat this with any urgency at all?

Hon Mrs Ecker: The reason that our government has given boards like the Windsor-Essex Catholic board, for example, 48% more for special education funding, and perhaps the Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic board 44% more in special education funding, the reason they have increased money, is because we recognize that there is an increased need.

Yes, ISA support grants were frozen because boards said to us that they needed experience in dealing with the new process to meet the special education needs of the high-needs students. We did that at the boards' request. But we also gave them additional monies this year yet again, inflexible monies to help meet these needs.

We understand that there need to be more refinements to this process. That's why we are continuing to meet with the boards. If they need assistance in terms of allocating their funding, again, my ministry staff are prepared to assist them to do that.

Mr Crozier: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Pursuant to section 37 of the standing orders, I will be filing the form that I'm not happy with that answer because the minister did not speak to the urgency of it.

The Speaker: The member will file with the table.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Southwest): My question is to the Chair of Management Board of Cabinet. Minister, as you are aware, I have a keen interest in information technology and I'm very interested in the government's use of information technology to provide better and more convenient services to the taxpayers of this province.

As the Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, can you tell me if you have a strategy in place to take advantage of the benefits of information technology to improve service to my constituents in Scarborough Southwest and to the taxpayers of Ontario?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I appreciate the question from my colleague the member for Scarborough Southwest. I would just like to say that I'm pleased to get the question because one of the most important things the government is doing is laying the foundation to use information and information technology to the benefit of the people of Ontario so that the people of Ontario can get access to government services when, where and how they want. The implementation of this strategy will be critical to improving customer service in this province.

Mr Newman: The answer was quite informative, and I know my constituents in Scarborough Southwest appreciate that.

In your answer you also wanted to have some further information to give to the House, and to my constituents in Scarborough Southwest, with some examples of how this information technology will help them.

Hon Mr Hodgson: I know the member for Scarborough Southwest's constituents and the people of Ontario will be interested to see some early results from the implementation of our IT strategy, that is, Service Ontario kiosks that allow taxpayers to buy licence plate stickers or change their address or their health card when they are available; not during government office hours but through the Service Ontario kiosks.

Ontario Business Connects is using technology to allow people to register a small business on line within 20 minutes. In the old days that would take anywhere from four to six weeks, and then it would have to be sent back if there were any errors.

Publications Ontario allows people of Ontario through the Internet to have access to the publications produced by the Ontario government. These are huge improvements but small steps in terms of our commitment to improving government services and making government work for the people of Ontario, not the other way around.

1520

COLLÈGE D'ALFRED

ALFRED COLLEGE

M. Gilles Bisson (Timmins-Baie James) : Ma question s'adresse au ministre de l'Agriculture. Votre ministère a recommandé d'éliminer la subvention de 1,5 \$ million du ministère au Collège d'Alfred, le seul collège agricole francophone dans la province.

Ma question est celle-ci : pour quelle raison accepterez-vous d'éliminer cette subvention, sachant que c'est le seul collège agricole de langue française en Ontario ?

Hon Ernie Hardeman (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): I appreciate the fact that the member opposite recognizes the importance of agriculture in Ontario. In fact, it is the second-highest employer providing employment to some 640,000 Ontarians. In fact, it provides \$25 billion in our economy, and I want to assure the member that we are very committed to education to the agriculture sector in our community. That's

why in 1997 we entered a partnership with the University of Guelph to provide, among other things, quality agriculture education for the people of the province in the agriculture community. In fact, the province presently spends \$11 billion a year to provide that type of education.

Enrolment in our agricultural colleges has increased each and every year in the last number of years. The graduates coming out of those colleges are indeed picked off by our agri-food sector and are provided jobs in our growing economy, the economy that's provided through tax cuts in the province. We're very happy for that to be happening.

M. Bisson : Monsieur le ministre, on sait asteur que la communauté francophone a des gros problèmes avec ce gouvernement quand ça vient à comprendre le dossier francophone. On vous a demandé pour quelle raison vous avez éliminé une subvention au Collège d'Alfred. Vous avez l'air de vous planter ici puis nous dire comment le collège de Guelph est important. Oui, c'est important pour les anglophones, mais nous les francophones avons besoin de notre collège.

Je vous demande encore : pour quelle raison avez-vous éliminé, en tant que ministre responsable de l'agriculture, la subvention au Collège d'Alfred ? Répondez une fois à la question.

Hon Mr Hardeman: I want to assure the member opposite that the \$1.5 million of which he speaks has not been eliminated from Alfred College at this point. As a ministry, we are looking at all our expenditures to make sure we are providing the best possible service in the best possible way for the people we serve and for our stakeholders in our ministry.

I can assure the member that we will be providing francophone education for francophones in our agricultural community as we have in the past and as we will continue to do in the future. But I want to point out that we want to look at all our expenditures to make sure we are as cost-effective and efficient with the taxpayers' money as we possibly can be.

HOMES FOR THE AGED

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): My question is for the minister responsible for seniors. We continue to read daily about the confusion and disagreement around who is and should be responsible for ensuring the safety of seniors in retirement homes. The minister responsible for seniors told us about process, about discussions, about reports that have been sitting on shelves for years. The people of Ontario are tired of proposals. They want action on this issue.

Minister, recently you were quoted as saying, "All I care about is that seniors are protected." Why weren't you there for 81-year-old Teofil Skupien? In February a health care aide from his retirement home went to the provincial government and to city hall and nothing was done. It was not until this gentleman walked into a police

station with a bruised face and three broken ribs that charges were laid. How can your government so arrogantly ignore seniors at risk? What action will you take today to ensure the safety of seniors in retirement homes in Ontario?

Hon Helen Johns (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, minister responsible for seniors and women): I would just like to first off say that as a result of the actions that the city of Toronto has taken recently, obviously if this gentleman walked into city hall today, he would get a very different response than he got three, four or five months ago. Now, of course, they have a hotline, they have people who go out and check different retirement homes to ensure that services are being provided.

But I want to say that there are some responsibilities that the province has; there is no question. Elder abuse is against the law and we have a responsibility to ensure that people are safe in their homes. If a senior is the subject of elder abuse, all they have to do is call the police and the police will go in, because elder abuse is against the law.

Mrs Dombrowsky: With regard to the minister's suggestion that the issue is being managed adequately by municipal representatives, I would suggest that, reading recent media reports, the mayor of the city of Toronto is having some difficulty having that responsibility laid at his feet. He has indicated very clearly that the province must give cities the power to license homes and would suggest that the minister is trying to download yet another provincial responsibility to the municipality.

The government needs to take some responsibility; the minister needs to take some action. We are aware of what's happening in the city of Toronto, but what about the other 585 municipalities in the province where the needs of seniors and their safety in retirement homes are not being addressed?

Hon Mrs Johns: I know the member is new, so let me just explain a few things that have happened in the past.

Let me be very clear when I say that Toronto and Etobicoke both had bylaws present before the amalgamation last year. A number of different communities have bylaws presently, which include Ottawa and Hamilton. Let me suggest to the member opposite that the other day I wrote to the mayor and asked if he wanted me to upload some services, if he didn't want to handle some of the responsibilities that he has. We're prepared to look at this.

What's important to ensure is that our seniors are safe within our communities. The municipality has responsibility, the province has responsibility and every person and every family in Ontario has a responsibility to ensure that seniors are safe in their community.

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): On a point of order, Speaker: I would appreciate you indicating whether or not this is a point of order. The minister has just made reference to bylaws that exist at the municipal level. It's my understanding that in the absence of provincial legislation, any municipal bylaws other than

in the city of Windsor may be ultra vires, and I'm asking for clarification of that.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Actually, I had a little bit of trouble hearing that. Could you explain the point of order again, please.

Mrs McLeod: I'm asking for clarification by the government, by the minister or any other minister of the government; a clear indication of whether, beyond the city of Windsor, which has a law that has been passed giving them the ability to make bylaws respecting care in retirement homes, other bylaws in respect of care in retirement homes at a municipal level are in fact ultra vires and need to be dealt with by government.

The Speaker: That's not a point of order; it's obviously a question.

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): On a point of personal privilege, Speaker: I'd like to correct the record. During question period I indicated that the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke and his party had voted for Bill 35. I would like to correct the record, Mr Speaker. They did vote for Bill 35, a vote in principle on June 25, 1998, including the honourable member. Only 10 opposition members, all of whom were NDP members, voted against the bill in principle. Of course, something happened between voting in principle and the politics of third reading debate, in which case 18 members decided to join the party of principle and vote against Bill 35. I would just like to clarify the record.

1530

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I wish to file my dissatisfaction with the response that I received from the minister and I would like to indicate at this time that I will be filing the appropriate papers for a late show.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The member will file with the table.

PETITIONS

HIGHWAY SAFETY

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I have a petition signed by a number of persons not only in Davenport but across the province. It's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it reads as follows:

"Whereas 13 people died during the first seven months of 1999 on Highway 401 between London and Windsor; and

"Whereas traffic levels on all sections of Highway 401 continue to increase; and

"Whereas Canada's number one trade and travel route was designed in the 1950s for fewer vehicles and lighter trucks; and

"Whereas road funding is almost completely paid through vehicle permit and driving licence fees; and

"Whereas Ontario road users pay 28 cents per litre of tax on gasoline, adding up to over \$2.7 billion in provincial gas taxes and over \$2.3 billion in federal gas taxes;

"We, the undersigned members of the Canadian Automobile Association and other residents of Ontario, respectfully request the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately upgrade Highway 401 to at least a six-lane highway with fully paved shoulders and rumble strips; and

"We respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario place firm pressure on the federal government to invest its gasoline tax revenue in road safety improvements in Ontario."

I have signed my name to this petition.

ABORTION

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario health system is overburdened and unnecessary spending must be cut; and

"Whereas pregnancy is not a disease, injury or illness and abortions are not therapeutic procedures; and

"Whereas the vast majority of abortions are done for reasons of convenience or finance; and

"Whereas the province has exclusive authority to determine what services will be insured; and

"Whereas the Canada Health Act does not require funding for elective procedures; and

"Whereas there is mounting evidence that abortion is in fact hazardous to women's health; and

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers funded over 45,000 abortions in 1993 at an estimated cost of \$25 million;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to cease from providing any taxpayers' dollars for the performance of abortions."

I will sign this on behalf of the 206 people who presented this petition.

HIGHWAY SAFETY

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas 13 people have died during the first seven months of 1999 on Highway 401 and the carnage on this highway continues; and

"Whereas traffic levels on all sections of Highway 401 continue to increase; and

"Whereas Canada's number one trade and travel route was designed in the 1950s for fewer vehicles and lighter trucks; and

"Whereas road funding is almost completely paid through vehicle permit and driving licence fees; and

"Whereas Ontario road users pay 28 cents per litre of tax on gasoline, adding up to \$2.7 billion in provincial gas taxes;

"We, the undersigned members of the Canadian Automobile Association and other residents of Ontario," including constituents of my riding, from St Thomas, Aylmer, London and Sparta, "do hereby present this petition to the Legislature."

I affix my signature to it.

Mr Bob Wood (London West): I have a petition submitted to me by the Canadian Automobile Association and signed by 288 people.

"Whereas 13 people died during the first seven months of 1999 on Highway 401 between London and Windsor; and

"Whereas traffic levels on all sections of Highway 401 continue to increase; and

"Whereas Canada's number one trade and travel route was designed in the 1950s for fewer vehicles and lighter trucks; and

"Whereas road funding is almost completely paid through vehicle permit and driving licence fees; and

"Whereas Ontario road users pay 28 cents per litre of tax on gasoline, adding up to over \$2.7 billion in provincial gas taxes and over \$2.3 billion in federal gas taxes;

"We, the undersigned members of the Canadian Automobile Association and other residents of Ontario, respectfully request the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately upgrade Highway 401 to at least a six-lane highway with full paved shoulders and rumble strips; and

"We respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario place firm pressure on the federal government to invest its gasoline tax revenue in road safety improvements in Ontario."

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): As a former highway engineer who has watched over the last eight years as volumes on highways have increased and upgrades have not kept pace with them, I also would like to present a petition signed by people from Wellington, Belleville, Foxboro and Carrying Place regarding highway 401 and the carnage on it. I am pleased to add my signature to it.

PARAMEDICS

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): A petition to the Honourable Lieutenant Governor and the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Health this past spring amended O. Reg. 501/97 under the Ambulance Act so that paramedics are considered no longer qualified to do their job if they accumulate a minimum of six demerit points on their driving record; and

"Whereas this amended regulation has resulted in at least one paramedic being fired from employment"—that's now six and, as I pointed out, two of those are from my hometown of Hamilton; "and

"Whereas the Ministry of Health's regulation is far more punitive and harsh than the Ministry of Transportation's, which monitors and enforces traffic safety through the Highway Traffic Act; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Transportation mails out a notice to drivers at six to nine demerit points and suspends a person's driver's licence at 15 points for a 30-day period; and

"Whereas none of the other emergency services in Ontario, eg, fire and police services, are held to the same standard or punished so harshly; and

"Whereas this amended regulation is not needed since other sections of the Ambulance Act protect the public against unsafe driving and/or criminal behaviour by paramedics (specifically O. Reg. 501/97, part III, section 6, subsections 8, 9 and 10); and

"Whereas the Ministry of Health's actions are blatantly unjust and punitive, and they discriminate against paramedics;

"Therefore we, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, beg leave to petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately eliminate any references to the accumulation of demerit points during employment from O. Reg. 501/97 under the Ambulance Act (specifically, part III, section 6, subsection 7), thereby allowing the Highway Traffic Act to apply to paramedics; and

"To order the immediate reinstatement of paramedics who have been fired under this unjust regulation."

My caucus colleagues and I continue to support the paramedics in Ontario.

HIGHWAY SAFETY

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): My petition is addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it concerns safety on Highway 401. It says that the undersigned respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario place firm pressure on the federal government to invest its gasoline tax revenue in road safety improvements in Ontario, and that the undersigned members of the Canadian Automobile Association and other residents of Ontario respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario immediately upgrade Highway 401 to at least a six-lane highway with full paved shoulders and rumble strips.

I have affixed my signature to it as well.

HEALTH CARE

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): I have a further petition received from residents which I'd like to read to the House.

"Say no to the privatization of health care.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas we are concerned about the quality of health care in Ontario; and

"Whereas we do not believe health care should be for sale; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government is taking steps to allow profit-driven companies to provide health care services in Ontario; and

"Whereas we won't stand for profits over people;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Do not privatize our health care services."

I concur with the intent of the petition and I will affix my signature to it.

TAXATION

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I have a petition from my riding of Durham. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the taxpayers in Canada and indeed in Ontario are the highest-taxed jurisdiction in the G7, let it be known that 25% of the federal and provincial taxes to government is up from 17% as recently as 1980. Therefore, for a family with two children earning \$21,000 in 1980 whose income doubled to \$43,000 in 1995, their income not just doubled; it went to \$10,000.

"Therefore we urge the government of Ontario to implement as soon as possible the taxpayers protection act."

1540

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the northern health travel grant was introduced in 1987 in recognition of the fact that northern Ontario residents are often forced to receive treatment outside their own communities because of the lack of available services; and

"Whereas the Ontario government acknowledged that the costs associated with that travel should not be fully borne by those residents and therefore that financial support should be provided by the Ontario government through the travel grant program; and

"Whereas travel, accommodation and other costs have escalated sharply since the program was first put in place, particularly in the area of air travel; and

"Whereas the Ontario government has provided funds so that southern Ontario patients needing care at the Northwestern Ontario Cancer Centre have all their expenses paid while receiving treatment in the north, which creates a double standard for health care delivery in the province; and

"Whereas northern Ontario residents should not receive a different level of health care nor be discriminated against because of their geographic locations;

"Therefore we, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, petition the Ontario Legislature to acknowledge the unfairness and inadequacy of the northern health travel grant program and commit to a review of the program with a goal of providing 100% funding of the travel costs for residents needing care outside their communities until such time as that care is available in our communities."

I affix my own signature in full agreement with the concern of my constituents.

PROTECTION FOR HEALTH CARE WORKERS

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas nurses in Ontario often experience coercion to participate in practices which directly contravene their deeply held ethical standards; and

"Whereas pharmacists in Ontario are often pressured to dispense and sell chemicals or devices contrary to their moral or religious beliefs; and

"Whereas public health workers in Ontario are expected to assist in providing controversial services and promoting controversial materials against their consciences; and

"Whereas physicians in Ontario often experience pressure to give referrals for medications, treatments and/or procedures which they believe to be gravely immoral; and

"Whereas competent health care workers and students in various health care disciplines in Ontario have been denied training, employment, continued employment and advancement in their intended fields and suffer further forms of unjust discrimination because of the dictates of their consciences; and

"Whereas health care workers experiencing such unjust discrimination have at present no practical or accessible legal means to protect themselves;

"We, the undersigned, urge the government of Ontario to enact legislation explicitly recognizing the freedom of conscience for health care workers, prohibiting coercion and unjust discrimination against health care workers because of their refusal to participate in matters contrary to the dictates of their consciences, and establishing penalties for such coercion and unjust discrimination."

I'll sign this on behalf of the 40-odd people who have signed it in my riding.

HIGHWAY SAFETY

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas 13 people died during the first seven months of 1999 on Highway 401 between London and Windsor; and

"Whereas traffic levels on all sections of Highway 401 continue to increase; and

"Whereas Canada's number one trade and travel route was designed in the 1950s for fewer vehicles and lighter trucks; and

"Whereas road funding is almost completely paid through vehicle permit and driver licensing fees; and

"Whereas Ontario road users pay 28 cents per litre of tax on gasoline, adding up to over \$2.7 billion in provincial gas taxes and over \$2.3 billion in federal gas taxes;

"We, the undersigned members of the Canadian Automobile Association and other residents of Ontario, respectfully request the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately upgrade Highway 401 to at least a six-

lane highway with full paved shoulders and rumble strips; and

"We respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario place firm pressure on the federal government to invest its gasoline tax revenue in road safety improvements in Ontario."

It's signed by a number of residents from Blenheim, Tilbury and Chatham and I affix my signature to this petition.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I have a petition here which is signed by a number of residents of Davenport and it concerns the issue of school closings.

"Whereas the Ontario government's decision to slash education funding could lead to, and has lead to, the closure of many neighbourhood schools, including one of the most community-oriented schools like F.H. Miller Junior School; and

"Whereas the present funding formula does not take into account the historic and cultural links schools have with their communities nor the special education programs that have developed as a direct need of our communities; and

"Whereas the prospect of closing neighbourhood community schools will displace many children and put others on longer bus routes; and

"Whereas Mike Harris promised in 1995 not to cut classroom spending, but has already cut at least \$1 billion dollars from our schools; and

"Whereas F.H. Miller Junior School is a community school with many links to the immediate neighbourhood, such as the family centre, after-school programs, special programs from Parks and Recreation, and a heritage language program;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned citizens, demand that the Harris government changes the funding formula to take into account historic, cultural and community links that F.H. Miller Junior School has established."

Since I agree with this petition, I affix my name to it.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TAXPAYER PROTECTION AND BALANCED BUDGET ACT, 1999

LOI DE 1999 SUR LA PROTECTION DES CONTRIBUABLES ET L'ÉQUILIBRE BUDGÉTAIRE

Mr Harris moved second reading of the following bill: Bill 7, An Act to protect taxpayers against tax increases, to establish a process requiring voter approval for proposed tax increases and to ensure that the Provincial Budget is a balanced budget / Projet de loi 24, Loi protégeant les contribuables des augmentations d'impôt.

établissant un processus d'approbation des projets d'augmentation d'impôt par les électeurs et garantissant l'équilibre du budget provincial.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): Mr Harris.

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I want to advise the House that I will be sharing my time with the member for Wentworth-Burlington.

It gives me great pleasure to speak on second reading of Bill 7, the Taxpayer Protection and Balanced Budget Act.

For far too long, the taxpayers of Ontario were forced to bear the burden of governments addicted to taxing and spending, governments that believed every problem we faced as a province could somehow be fixed by more spending, more bureaucracy, more programs, more taxes.

Previous governments, I would suggest to you, tried to be all things to all people, and in the process they nearly bankrupted this great province of Ontario. They didn't realize that high taxes kill jobs. I believe they didn't realize that, because I don't think they would have proceeded down that spiralling, escalating increase in taxes had they known the devastation it would wreak on Ontario. They didn't realize that for government to do a good job of providing the services that matter to people, services like accessible health care, quality education, government had to live within its means to be able to provide these services, not just today but next week, next month, next year, and on a sustainable basis.

Bill 7 would provide protection and insurance for the taxpayers of Ontario from unwanted tax hikes, provide protection and insurance against reckless deficit spending.

The taxpayer protection sections of Bill 7 stem from a very simple, and yet an important, idea: That politicians should not be able to raise the people of Ontario's tax rates without getting their permission first. I think we all know what happened in the past. Politicians would promise a program, and all the attention and focus would be on this new program or new spending, without an accountability to the taxpayers or to the public of how it would be paid for. The sections of Bill 7 now say: "You can't do that. You can no longer promise the goodies without also telling how they are going to be paid for, and identify that."

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Our government listened when the people of Ontario told us that taxes were too high. We understood that high taxes were driving jobs and investment out of this province that lead Canada for much of Canada's history and much of Ontario's history. Then there was a period of time when Ontario became so high-taxed, with deficits to boot, because you would argue that you either run up deficits or you increase taxes to deal with this voracious appetite for spending that was there, but the fact of the matter is we had exhausted both. We were running record deficits and record high taxation.

We listened to the people for a number of reasons on this.

Number one, we listened because it was destroying jobs, it was destroying development, it was destroying investment, it was destroying growth in this province of Ontario.

Number two, though, is another interesting sidelight of this, if you like, and it seems counterintuitive, but the facts were these: The higher the former government increased taxes, the less revenue they got. It was like a business. Let's say your primary business was selling refrigerators and you priced your refrigerators at \$1,000 a fridge, and business wasn't going very well because your competitors were selling the same fridge for \$800. If a businessman said, "Well, I need more profits so I'll take my \$1,000 price to \$1,100 or \$1,200," thinking, "I'll make more money," that would seem to be the Liberal and NDP way of doing things. Of course, what happened was that the public said, "We're really not buying your fridges now," and this businessman would be out of business and he would have no profits.

That is what happened in Ontario. It wasn't that the 30-odd NDP tax hikes were any worse than the 30-odd Liberal tax hikes before them. That wasn't the problem. The problem was that the cumulative effect of all these tax increases was that Ontario had reached the point where it was into a law of diminishing returns. You increase the rate, you drive more jobs and investment out of the province and you actually get fewer dollars. So there were two very good reasons why we had to address this very serious problem, created exclusively, I might add, by Liberal and NDP politicians in Ontario.

What have we done? Thus far, we have announced a total of 99 tax cuts, 99 different ways and areas that we have reduced taxation. Each one of these tax cuts was designed in a very careful and thoughtful way to increase jobs and investment in the province—each and every one of them. Those tax cuts let those who earn the money in the first place keep more of their own money; more money for them to spend—after all, it's their money in the first place—more money that they could save, more money that they could invest as they see fit, which means, of course, more jobs and more prosperity for Ontario.

That's a very different approach from those in the opposition benches, which is why those few who are here today are so riled up when we point out the facts to them of what happened. It is a very different approach, and we make no apology for being different than the Liberals in particular, who like tax increases. It's something within their nature. It may be in their party's political constitution, I don't know, but for some reason or other they like high taxes and high government spending. It is their mantra. It is interchangeable with the word "Liberal," at least when it comes to Liberals in Ontario.

What happened from those on the opposition benches when they had the opportunity in the 10-year period—and really and truly you could say Liberal, NDP or socialist; it was interchangeable. There's no discernible difference in the 10-year record, nor is there any difference, I would argue, in opposition to our policies today.

They seem to be one and the same. They hiked taxes 65 times over 10 years. We don't ever again in the province of Ontario want that kind of job-killing tax-hiking to happen.

That is why our taxpayer protection law would require that future governments seek voter approval if they want to impose new taxes or to increase tax rates on any of the major tax instruments that we have, and we have a variety of them, as I think you know.

Through this legislation, we're asking that governments of all stripes treat taxpayer dollars as carefully as taxpayers treat their own personal finances. The taxpayers of Ontario surely deserve nothing less than that. Ontario families work hard to make ends meet and keep their own budgets balanced. This law would require our government and future governments to manage taxpayer dollars in the same way. We know, first, this: This money belongs to the taxpayers, not to the government, and we are requiring future governments to recognize this reality.

This bill also contains a balanced budget law that would prevent governments from running budget deficits. It is my hope and it is the hope of my colleagues on the government side of the House that the era of deficit spending in Ontario is over once and for all.

Let's look at the facts. In the last 35 years, Ontario has had balanced budgets or surpluses four times: four times in 35 years. Three of those balanced budgets came in the 1960s. That means that a great many people in our province have never seen two consecutive balanced budgets. I'll tell you this: People since the 1960s have never had a government bring in a balanced budget and then keep a balanced budget throughout that budget year. That has never happened since the 1960s, when there were three Progressive Conservative budgets that were balanced.

Today, every child born in Ontario is born in debt, bearing a combined federal-provincial debt load of \$28,711: \$9,572 for Ontario and \$19,139 for the federal government. We all know it has been Liberals in government in Ottawa for most of this century.

In 1998, average households—think of this—handed over 25.1% of their income in federal and provincial taxes to governments, up from less than 17% in 1980. When you look at that, from 1980 through to 1998, 17% of the average household's income went in federal and provincial taxes, and gradually over that period of time it's gone up to 25%. These facts show that for far too long governments just didn't get it. They took out the people of Ontario's credit card and they maxed it out. They took these credit cards and maximized each and every credit card that they could possibly get their mitts on, and they left our children with a pile of debt to pay.

Our balanced budget law cuts up that credit card, all of those credit cards. Under this new law, the Ontario budget must balance. It will be illegal for the budget of Ontario not to be in balance.

Bill 7 is tougher than any of the balanced budget bills of any other province in Canada. Cabinet ministers, for example, will be docked 25% of their cabinet salary for the first prohibited deficit, 50% for the second and 50%

for each consecutive deficit thereafter. Not only would it be against the law, but there would be the strictest financial penalties for members of the executive council in Canada.

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Beginning in fiscal year 2001-02, a budget deficit may only occur under extraordinary circumstances such as natural disaster or war. The legislation also provides the means to prudently manage any future economic downturn and respond to emergency situations, as we acknowledge government must do.

Our bill also recognizes there may be some situations, such as economic downturns, that require governments to plan ahead and establish a rainy day fund. Three years' worth of surpluses could offset a deficit in the following year. This is the way it's supposed to work: You don't start borrowing first, you put ahead first. That way, if governments plan, they can build a rainy day fund to help during times of economic hardship. This would allow a government to respond to an economic downturn without forcing drastic spending cuts. It is not our intention, as some have said, to balance at any cost, particularly if it would mean cutting priority programs. In fact, it is our intention, and this legislation facilitates, responsible budgeting and planning so that never has to happen.

In conclusion, taxpayers and voters told us they wanted to be confident that our province's finances will be managed responsibly not only for today but also into the future.

The Taxpayer Protection and Balanced Budget Act is designed to make our great province strong and competitive well into the next millennium.

This legislation will help us to build a better tomorrow for everyone in the province of Ontario; a better tomorrow in which our children are not born into this crushing burden of debt; a better tomorrow in which fewer taxpayer dollars are spent in interest and in debt payments, and more taxpayer dollars are directed to services that matter to people; a better tomorrow in which taxpayers remain as respected as they are by our government, and when politicians cannot hike tax rates without first asking the people who pay those taxes.

It is my hope that we will achieve this better tomorrow and that Ontario will become even stronger and more prosperous as a result of this in the future.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Toni Skarica (Wentworth-Burlington): For me it's both an honour and a privilege to be speaking to this bill. I'd like to go back to 1994. At that time I was not involved in politics in any way. I was working in the crown attorney's office. If I could say this humbly, I was a member of the public and I was very concerned about what was going on. At that time, as you recall, debts and deficit spending of both the federal and provincial government was completely out of control. I decided at that time to get involved in politics because, like many people in the public, I was totally disgusted with what was happening around me. I'm an immigrant to this province and I felt, just as the Premier has indicated, that this great

province is being brought low and that instead of it being a province of opportunity, it was a province facing bankruptcy and ruin.

There was a very deliberate reason why I chose to run for the Progressive Conservative Party. I could have run for any party; I had no political background at that time. The reason I ran for the Progressive Conservative Party was quite simply that they had a plan to deal with what everyone considered was an absolute crisis. The Common Sense Revolution had been published a year ahead of time. I knew what I was running on. The Premier had signed the taxpayers' pledge for this very type of legislation. The Liberals at that time, as you recall, weren't interested in this type of legislation. So really there was only one party to run for, if you cared about these issues of government overspending, and that was the Conservative Party of Ontario.

If you want to run in politics—I don't think most people are aware of what you have to do—you basically have to sign up members of the party and you have a nomination contest. As I say, I didn't have any political background. What I did was prepare an urgent message indicating what kind of state we were in. I have it here—

Interjection.

Mr Skarica: In 1994. It was entitled, "Urgent Message Number One: Combined Federal, Provincial and Municipal Public Debt." I have it here. I don't know if people can see, but it's a straight line upwards, from 1983 to 1995. It was not the American stock market, although it would have looked pretty similar; it was in fact the debt load of all levels of government.

At that time, federal interest payments were almost \$30 billion a year. One out of every three tax dollars was going to service our debt. A good night's sleep cost you \$40 million. When I pointed this out to one person, he said, "I know what the government is doing to me, but I didn't know it was going to be this expensive to sleep with it."

Unfortunately, the Ontario government situation was basically the same. I have a chart here of what was happening to our annual interest payment and it had a similar dramatic upward rise. At that time, we were paying \$15,000 per minute in interest payments. Accordingly, each and every day Ontario taxpayers were receiving an approximate \$135-million bill in government interest payments, and even though that's in Canadian dollars, that's a very dramatic impact.

At that time, in 1994, we had one of the world's heaviest tax rates. Taxes on families since 1961 had risen 1,200%. At that time as well, our interest rates were going up and basically we were facing a fiscal crisis. Any student of history knows that at that time we were facing virtual bankruptcy. Once you hit that wall of bankruptcy, what happens is you lose the rule of law, and once you do that, you've lost everything. I think that was a situation that we were facing for the first time in our history.

That's why it's of the greatest honour to speak to this bill, because what we are doing as a government is preventing a similar situation from developing. We are

preventing prolific government spending, the raising of taxes, the raising of deficits—and ultimately not only do you ruin the economy, but you could lose everything you have.

As the Premier has indicated, this legacy of taxing and spending certainly in 1995 had left us in very bad shape. We're basically in a situation where we have an accumulation of debt that will take generations to pay back.

In the last 35 years, Ontario has had balanced budgets or surpluses only four times: 1965-66, 1966-67, 1969-70 and 1989-90. The legacy that has left us is as follows: As the Premier has indicated, every child born in Ontario is in substantial debt, with a combined federal-provincial debt load of almost \$30,000, and that doesn't include municipal debt. By the end of March 1999, our debt had reached \$109 billion, more than 50 times greater than our debt in 1964. Accordingly, Ontario is now spending \$18,000 per minute just to service its debt. Public debt interest, at \$9.8 billion this year, is almost half of what we pay for health care.

Past deficits are tomorrow's taxes. As the Premier has indicated, in 1998 average Ontario households handed over 25% of their income in federal and provincial taxes to governments, up from less than 17% in 1980. This tax burden includes personal income taxes plus employment insurance premiums and CPP.

As has also been indicated by the Premier and by the member from Durham, in 1980 a one-career Ontario family with two children, earning \$21,000, paid \$3,000 in net personal income and statutory payroll deductions. In 1995, adjusting for inflation, this family would have had to earn \$43,000 and pay \$6,000 in taxes just to be as well off. However, that family is now paying \$10,660, so clearly our living standard has been damaged. As a result of rising tax rates, the elimination of deductions and benefits and the end of full indexation of the tax system, this family's income, as is indicated—while it has more than doubled, these taxes have more than tripled.

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According to a recent report by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, Canada has the highest personal income in the G7. Tax revenues in Canada, at about 30% of GDP, are much higher than in the United States, the country's most important economic partner. This difference puts Canada at an economic disadvantage in trying to prevent the emigration of its tax base, particularly south of the border.

In order to restrain future government spending and bring our taxes down to a reasonable level, Ontario is bringing in a combined balanced budget and taxpayer protection bill. This legislation is one of the toughest and most comprehensive of its kind.

Highlights of the legislation include:

Ontario would have to balance its budget each fiscal year, as do most other provinces with balanced budget legislation.

We have the highest penalties. Cabinet members would be penalized 25% of their cabinet salary for the

first deficit, 50% for the second consecutive and 50% for each year thereafter.

There is flexibility in the legislation. A deficit would be allowed in exceptional circumstances, such as war, national disaster and a more than 5% drop in revenues.

The government would be held to the accounting policies in place at the start of the fiscal year in determining whether the budget is balanced.

The legislation applies to all major taxes, including personal income taxes, corporate tax, retail sales tax, fuel taxes and education property taxes.

Except in very limited circumstances, the Ontario government, before raising any of the taxes listed previously, would be required to seek voter approval through a referendum which would require a clear, concise, impartially worded question capable of a Yes or No answer in an estimate of the revenue impact of the proposed increase or new tax.

In a nutshell, the legislation prohibits governments from spending more money than they have except in very limited circumstances. Future governments must seek permission from the voters before raising taxes. Ontario families work hard to make ends meet and keep their own budgets balanced. This legislation forces future governments to manage taxpayers' dollars in the same way.

What does that mean for the average Ontario taxpayer? Some things that can no longer happen are as follows:

From 1985 to 1995, Ontario taxpayers faced 65 provincial tax increases over which they had no say. For example, and I'll give a number of them, in 1985 the Ontario personal income tax rate increased to 50% of basic federal tax; the Ontario personal income tax surtax was levied at 3% of Ontario tax in excess of \$5,000.

In 1988, a gasoline tax was imposed which increased gas taxes by one cent per litre; the retail sales tax was increased by one percentage point, to 8%.

In 1989, and this was during the Liberal regime, gasoline tax increased by two cents per litre; a fuel tax was imposed which increased fuel and gas taxes by a further two cents per litre; the Ontario provincial income tax rate was increased to 53% of the basic federal tax; an employer health tax was levied on all Ontario employers; a tire tax was imposed; a commercial concentration levy was imposed.

In 1991—now we're talking about an NDP government—a gasoline and diesel tax was imposed, which increased those taxes by 3.4 cents per litre; an Ontario surtax was imposed, which increased the Ontario surtax rate from 10% to 14% of Ontario tax in excess of \$10,000.

In 1992, the Ontario personal income tax rate was increased to 54.5% of basic federal tax, and to 55% in 1993. The Ontario provincial income tax surtax was restructured and the top surtax rate was again increased to 20% of Ontario tax in excess of \$8,000.

In 1993, the taxes in Ontario continued to increase at the same time as the economy was deteriorating. The

Ontario provincial income tax rate was increased to 58% of basic federal tax. The Ontario top provincial income tax surtax rate increased to 25% of Ontario tax in excess of \$8,000 in 1993 and to 30% in 1994. Basically, it's exhausting to read it, but it was even more exhausting to pay it. That's what Ontario taxpayers were asked to do.

One of the criticisms of the legislation is that it has no flexibility, that once you lock in governments and they can't tax, they're going to have to slash government programs and that type of thing. If you really wanted to look at what does inhibit flexibility in government spending, it's debt. As I've indicated, Ontario is spending more than \$18,000 per minute just to service its debt. Public debt interest, at \$9.8 billion in 1999, is almost half of what the province will pay in important services such as health care.

The following are other examples of what could be purchased with that money, keeping in mind that we pay \$9.8 billion in public debt interest this year:

To hire 10,000 more nurses over the next two years requires \$375 million, just a fraction of the interest payment.

To expand home care beyond the original long-term-care plan, an additional \$40 million; again, just a fraction of \$9.8 billion.

The Ontario Innovation Trust, which will provide funding to Ontario universities, hospitals and colleges for labs, high-tech equipment and other research infrastructure, \$250 million; again, a fraction of \$9.8 billion.

The expansion of the access to opportunities program by almost 40% from 17,000 new tuition scholarships to 23,000 this year, an investment by the government of \$78 million; again, a fraction of what's being paid for public debt interest.

The strategic skills investment program in which 19 of Ontario's 25 community colleges have entered into new skills partnerships with industry in self-sustaining programs: That's a government investment of \$115 million; again, just a minor percentage of \$9.8 billion.

Approving post-natal care for mothers and their newborns: We're investing \$45 million this year; again, a fraction of \$9.8 billion.

We're investing to build and modernize universities and colleges, \$740 million this year; again, a fraction, less than 10%, of the \$9.8 billion being paid for debt interest.

To give you an idea of the magnitude of the interest payment, this year the Ontario government is spending on university operating grants \$1.6 billion, on colleges \$700 million and on student loans \$522 million, for a total of \$4 billion, less than half of what we're paying for public debt interest.

Tuition fees being paid by students this year for universities was \$3.8 billion and colleges was \$1.7 billion, for a total of \$5.5 billion. In essence, what is being paid in tuition fees is about half of what we're paying in debt interest. If we didn't have a debt, if we didn't have to pay public debt interest, we could pay 100% of all the tuition fees in this province and still have \$4 billion left over.

How does our taxpayer protection and balanced budget legislation compare to other provinces? Right now Manitoba and Alberta are the only other provinces that have taxpayer protection legislation. Of the three provinces that have this type of legislation, ours is the toughest and most comprehensive.

Ontario's balanced budget provisions demonstrate a strong commitment to fiscal responsibility in these ways. Ontario would have to balance its budget each fiscal year, as do most of the provinces with balanced budget legislation. Ontario's legislation would have the highest penalties. Cabinet members would be penalized 25% of their cabinet salary for the first deficit, 50% for the second consecutive deficit and 50% for each consecutive deficit thereafter.

A deficit would be allowed only in exceptional circumstances such as, war, natural disasters and, as I've indicated, a dramatic revenue decrease. Overall, these circumstances are similar to Manitoba's legislation, which is up to now a benchmark for balanced budget legislation in Canada. The government would be held to the accounting policies in place at the start of the fiscal year in determining whether the budget is balanced. It wouldn't be able to circumvent the legislation by changing the rules halfway through the game.

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Ontario's taxpayer protection provisions would be the most comprehensive in Canada. Ontario's protection would greatly exceed Alberta's legislation, which only applies to introducing a general sales tax. By applying to new taxes and more tax rates, Ontario's protection would also exceed Manitoba's legislation. However, unlike Manitoba, the accumulated net surplus from which the government could draw upon in times of need would only include the results of the past two years, not an ongoing fund like Manitoba's fiscal stabilization fund. Combined with the extensive taxpayer protection provisions, this legislation is the toughest of its kind in Canada.

As I've indicated previously, and as the Premier has indicated, taxes are too high in this country. We were elected, both in 1995 and 1999, because the public agreed with us that taxes were too high and have voted for the 99 tax cuts that we have implemented, 69 of them in the first four years of our mandate and 30 that will come this year.

Our record proves our commitment to lower taxes. With this legislation we will ensure that future governments will have to seek voter approval if they want to raise tax rates.

I would like to go into the past to see how this legislation would have affected past government's behaviour. I would like to specifically go through to the NDP era to see how this would have affected their economic performance. As is indicated, the legislation requires dramatic penalties on cabinet ministers' salaries if there isn't a balanced budget. There are only three exceptions to that spelled out in the legislation: expenditures relating to natural disasters, expenditures relating to war or, if there

is a year-over-year revenue decline of 5% or more, that would be an exception as well.

Going to the budget, how would that have impacted the NDP government? When they took over in 1990-91, there was a deficit of \$3 billion, so that would have required a 25% pay cut. The recession started to really take hold in Ontario at that time, and as I have indicated, the NDP reaction to that was to raise taxes, and that in fact had a very dampening effect on the economy. I'm not saying it's all their fault, but they certainly didn't do anything to help; in fact, in my opinion, by raising taxes, contributed to the economic decline at that time.

In any event, in 1991-92, the deficit ballooned from \$3 billion to almost \$11 billion. However, the revenue in Ontario at that time for the Ontario government dropped from \$42.8 billion to a little over \$40 billion, which was more than a 5% decline. So the legislation at that time would not have required a pay cut for the NDP cabinet ministers as they would be given the flexibility in this legislation to have not a balanced budget but to have a deficit.

The following year, 1992-93, the revenue in the province of Ontario went up by almost \$1 billion, but so did the deficit. It went from \$11 billion to over \$12 billion, so not only did the NDP spend the extra \$1 billion that they got, they spent \$1 billion on top of that. Under this legislation, they would have had to take a penalty for doing that, and from my reading of it, it would have been a 25% pay cut. As well, they would have been prohibited from raising many of the taxes that they were doing at that time, including a very gradual but still dramatic increase in the provincial income tax rate. So in 1992, the NDP cabinet ministers would have been taking a 25% pay cut.

The following year, the deficit dropped by \$1 billion to \$11 billion, even though provincial revenue went up by almost \$2 billion, so again spending was increasing by about \$600 million. The NDP ministers at that time would have had to take a 50% pay cut. Similarly, the following year, they had a \$10-billion deficit, and they would again have had to take a 50% pay cut. Perhaps they would even have called the election a year earlier, because if you were a minister in that government, with this legislation, by calling the election a year earlier, if you were re-elected, even though you came back as a regular member, you would have got a pay increase if you were in the cabinet.

Had we had this legislation back in the 1990-95 era, two things would have happened: Cabinet ministers would have taken a dramatic pay cut of up to 50%, at least in the last couple of years of their mandate, and they would have had to go to the public to raise taxes, as they were doing each and every year. If I was typical of the average person out there, and I think I was, it is my suspicion that they would not have been permitted to raise those taxes. If they hadn't been permitted to do that, then they would have had to review their programs and deal with reducing their expenses, as we did when we took over in 1995.

That brings me to the Liberals. How would they have reacted? We saw in 1990-95 that the NDP approach was to spend more, to increase deficits, to increase the debt—basically to double the debt during that period of time. This legislation would have seriously hampered their ability to do that.

The Liberals agree with this legislation although, interestingly enough, in 1994 they weren't participating in advancing it and they weren't supporting it, but they do now. Their approach now is that they agree with this. Does that mean they're on our page now? Unfortunately, the answer is no. The Liberals agree now that maybe we shouldn't increase any taxes but they disagree with the notion of cutting taxes.

For example, I'll read some quotes from their leader, Dalton McGuinty, and I'll give a brief history of Mr McGuinty's commitment to tax cuts.

In the Kitchener-Waterloo leadership debate on September 22, 1996, Mr McGuinty was quoted as saying this: "No, I am not in favour of a tax break."

In a news conference on May 6, 1997, Mr McGuinty was quoted: We "wouldn't have a tax cut. Couldn't afford a tax cut."

Mr McGuinty was quoted in the North Bay Nugget on July 29, 1997: "I wouldn't give you a tax cut."

On Focus Ontario on August 15, 1998, Mr McGuinty indicated: "I'm not the tax cut guy."

What is the Liberal approach to tax cuts? It is this: They say yes to tax cuts, but only after more spending. For example, here are some further quotes. This is from their 20/20 platform document, the first edition:

"Immediate investments in the education and health of our people. A balanced budget. And then tax cuts as the economy grows...."

"Once the budget is balanced, the fiscal dividend would be split three ways: 25% in tax relief aimed at lower and middle-income Ontarians...."

You're going to hear this theme repeated by the federal Liberals, the same thing. They have it as a 50-50 split as opposed to the 20/20 platform commitment.

Mr McGuinty was quoted on April 14, 1999, as follows: "Now, time will tell if we supply a tax cut in the second year of our mandate."

On the Roy Green show on CHML in our area, in Hamilton, on April 20, 1999, Mr McGuinty was heard to say this: "We'll be able to provide significant tax relief in the second year of our mandate."

On April 20, the same day, at a news conference in Richmond Hill he basically repeats that: "We'll be able to balance the budget in the first year of our mandate and will be able to cut taxes in the second year."

It changes a little bit at a news conference on May 10, 1999, where Mr McGuinty said this: "Well, we're talking about, according to the government's economic projections, we're talking about a tax cut available in the third year. So in our third year we'll have to put forward the money, and talk about what we're going to do at that point in time."

Interestingly enough, although the Liberals support this legislation now, I wonder how they would have reconciled that with their campaign commitments. You will recall from a news conference and from your campaign documents, the Liberals over there, that they were talking about giving school boards the right to raise money at the local level, talking about a 5% to 10% additional tax authority.

Similarly, there was going to be a 3% increase in commercial and industrial energy. As John Ibbetson said in the National Post on April 19, 1999, "Mr McGuinty hasn't mentioned it, but after repeated inquiries his staff revealed that the Liberal plan also envisions a 3% increase in commercial and industrial energy rates." How that would have been reconciled with this legislation, I don't know.

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Anyway, the basic Liberal theory provincially, and I'll talk about federally because it's almost the same, is: "We can't afford tax cuts now. We have to balance the budget first. Once that's happened, once we have our revenues to pay for our programs, then we'll think about tax cuts." That has in fact been the experience and the approach of the federal government.

A little-known fact—and it was mentioned during the heckling by the Liberal backbench when the Premier was speaking. It was mentioned that the Liberals have balanced the budget, but how have you balanced the budget? I've got the government of Canada statement of revenues and expenditures here, and it is very interesting to look at exactly how the Liberals have balanced the budget.

I'll start in 1995, because that's when we took over in Ontario. Their gross revenues in 1995 were \$135 billion, and their expenditures were \$172 billion. So they had almost a \$40-billion deficit. When you move forward to 1998, you see that their revenues are \$164 billion, almost a \$30-billion increase, and that their expenses are \$161 billion, about a \$10-billion decrease. Where has most of that come from? Most of that has come from cuts to transfer payments to the provinces, including almost \$3 billion to the Ontario government.

What the federal government has done is they haven't cut taxes; they have allowed revenues to increase, and if you examine what has happened in the economies of the provinces, you'll know that most of that revenue has come from the province of Ontario, because we've had more economic growth here in the last four years than the rest of the country combined. So most of that \$30 billion, certainly at least 50% of it, has come from the province of Ontario. The way the Liberals balanced the budget is they have kept the taxes high and they've just allowed revenues to catch up. They've made virtually no cuts to government expenditures except for transfer payments to the provinces. That's how they've balanced the budget.

As you know, we have taken a totally different approach. We have taken the approach that in order to stimulate the economy, you can't just sit back and do nothing. You have to realize that high taxes discourage business investment, discourage the creation of jobs.

Lower tax rates increase business investment, increase confidence in the economy, and the economy grows. That's what's happened here in Ontario. As we've cut taxes, as we've cut the income tax rate by 30%, as we've cut a variety of other taxes, we've increased business investment. We've had more growth here in Ontario than in any other province, and it has not been because of the boom in the United States. That has helped, there's no doubt about it, but we've had more growth in Ontario than all the other provinces because we have been aggressive in cutting taxes. Now we have the lowest tax rates in the country. We have been aggressive in getting rid of red tape and creating a favourable business climate.

One of the best examples of how to create jobs and stimulate the economy is in the film industry. What has happened in the film industry? The film industry, when we took over in 1994-95, was languishing due to high taxes. The Ontario government in every budget since 1996 expanded and enhanced Ontario film and television tax credits, and in fact introduced a number of computer animation and special-effects tax credits.

The Globe and Mail acknowledged in a recent article as follows: "Tax incentives were dropped by previous provincial governments, which resulted in a decline in the film and movie production in the province. The current government realized steps had to be taken to create jobs in the entertainment industry for people of Ontario," so a new set of initiatives was brought in the beginning of 1996. Those initiatives were a series of tax cuts targeted to help out that industry.

What has been the impact of that? It has been as follows: Statistics show that the film industry is responsible for 35,000 jobs and now generates \$1.5 billion in economic spinoffs. Movies and TV projects filmed in Ontario in 1998 totalled 185, compared with 161 in 1997 and 125 in 1996; 1998 figures show that TV film production pumped \$740 million into the Ontario economy, \$347 million from foreign projects. That's an increase of 57% in foreign productions.

It's clear that what happened in the film industry was that it was languishing. It was not doing very well; it wasn't creating jobs. The Ontario government was elected in 1995. We introduced a series of tax credits and we kept doing it. We did it in 1996, 1997 and 1998, and what's happened is that this industry, which was not doing very well, is now showing remarkable health, to the point where Toronto is known as Hollywood North. That's a clear example of how, if you take an industry, if you take an aspect of the economy that's being killed by high taxes and you lower taxes, what you do is you get stimulation in investment, stimulation in job creation and ultimately you get more revenues. That's exactly what's happened to us.

What the Liberals say—"You borrowed \$10 billion to pay for your tax cut"—is nonsense. That's just out and out garbage. If you look at the Ontario budget, that shows up nowhere. In fact, if you look at page 53 of the last Ontario budget, the 1999 Ontario budget papers, you see that each and every year as we've implemented the tax

cuts, and not only personal income tax but in all other areas, 99 in total now, our revenues have gone up, from \$36 billion in 1995-96 to \$38 billion in 1996-97, to \$41 billion in 1997-98, to \$42 billion in 1998-99. That's as a result of the economy expanding, of investment coming into the province, of 540,000 new jobs being created and those people paying taxes. I don't know how many of them came off welfare but I'm sure many of them did. It's not surprising that as the economy has expanded, over 400,000 people have come off welfare.

Our approach has been to look at taxes and to reduce them. That has stimulated job creation and proven a boon to our economy, to the point where we've created more jobs in the last four years than any four-year period in history. In 1998, we created over 200,000 jobs, the most ever in history.

What we've done, and it's not well known, is we've balanced two budgets. We're about to balance our budget this year, but we've also balanced the government of Canada budget because we've stimulated the economy. We've stimulated our economy, the most thriving economy of all the provinces, and all the federal government did was sit back, leave the tax rates the same and just got a flood of new revenue. That's how they balanced the budget.

If anyone wants to know how the Liberals would deal with taxes in the future, all you have to do is look in today's papers, where the federal government now has balanced the budget but, as I've indicated, not through their initiatives. It's been basically that they've cut transfer payments to all the provinces and they've just sat back and waited for revenues to increase, which they have, in large part because provinces such as Ontario and Alberta have cut tax rates and have stimulated their economies.

If you want to look at the other way to go, just look at the disaster in BC, another NDP disaster, where taxes have gone up, where you've got an economy that's completely failing.

A good indication of what the Liberals would do, and are about to do, is to take a look federally. Right now the federal tax burden is at a historic high. Today's Globe and Mail editorial indicates as follows:

"The federal tax burden is at a historic high in relation to the gross domestic product. Federal taxes will claim 17.8% of GDP this year, the highest proportion in 40 years. Ten years ago, the proportion was only 16.2% ...; 20 years ago, it was only 13.8%."

This is the Globe and Mail. It's not me talking, although you're going to hear it.

"Our historically high tax burden means that tax reductions have a strong claim on Ottawa's budget surpluses. Rising federal taxes have been the biggest drag on personal disposable income in the 1990s.

"High tax burdens and high marginal rates also undermine productivity and economic growth. That was Nobel Prize winner Robert Mundell's argument as Ronald Reagan assumed the presidency in 1981, and it has served the US economy very well. By comparison,

Canadians have been getting poorer in a lagging economy"

"If our tax burden was at historic lows and our economy were more productive, we could raise real per capita spending on desirable programs without raising tax burdens"

"As taxes fall and the economy grows, more aggressive direct debt repayment will be feasible."

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What's the Liberal response to this criticism? If you look at the US experience, they have been cutting taxes and have the most booming economy in the world. Ontario has been cutting taxes for the last four years. We have the most booming economy in Canada. In fact, our economic growth has been the best of all the G7 nations, and that's with being saddled with high federal tax rates.

What's the Liberal response to this demand or desire among the Canadian public for lower tax rates? It's again in today's Globe and Mail: "Taxes Too High? Leave the Country, Chrétien Advises." Talk about arrogance. That's the response of the Liberals if taxes are too high: "Yes, our tax burden is the highest in our history. It's the highest in the G7 nations. We have property taxes that are the highest in the free world. We have tax rates that are higher than all our competitors. If you don't like it, leave the country."

Again, if you look at the papers today, they indicate "Liberals' Surpluses Just Aren't Theirs." They just don't get it. That's right. The surpluses that the government of Canada is now experiencing have not been because of anything they have done. There's been nothing dramatic that they have done. It's been simply because Canadians have worked hard and are paying taxes at crushingly high levels. Some provinces, such as Ontario and Alberta, have been aggressive in reducing their tax rates in target industries which were suffering from high tax rates.

Another one that I might mention is the horse racing industry. Just before the election and after I met with Charlie Juravinski, the owner of the Flamboro Downs racetrack. He basically indicated to me that he's going to go out of business. The crushing tax burden he has every year takes him from a profit situation to a loss situation. Again, if you go to the Ontario budget, what did we do with that situation? He wasn't the only one. Basically every track owner was in a similar situation where they were profitable before taxes but after taxes they were not and they were all about to go out of business.

What we did was reduce and slash the racetracks tax. In 1995 it was \$92 million, in 1996 it was \$46 million and in 1997-98 it was \$4 million. What that has done for that industry is allow it to survive and to continue to operate. In fact, it's healthy now and providing jobs, many of them in rural Ontario. It's another example of an industry that was in trouble because of crushingly high taxes. We didn't wait for that industry to get better and then increase our revenues. We looked at that industry, we saw it was in trouble because of high taxes and so we cut tax rates.

What this legislation is going to do is ensure that in the future governments can't—governments historically have looked at their problems and indicated, "We have budget problems so what we're going to do is raise taxes." All that did was create a vicious circle where when you raised taxes, it meant that the economy didn't do as well as it could have done, which meant less revenues for government, which meant they thought they should raise taxes even more, which continued the vicious cycle.

The Liberals and the NDP, the members on the other side, opposed each and every tax cut. Every one of the 69 tax cuts we introduced from 1995 to 1999 was opposed by the members on the other side.

The end result of our tax cuts has been, as I've indicated, that we have the most flourishing economy not only in Canada but in the G7, in the free world. In fact, this year, with again 30 more tax cuts coming on line, our economy is doing better than every forecast. It was forecast in our budget papers that the economy would grow by 3.7%, but in fact it has grown to the tune of 4.3% to 5%. The TD Bank states: "Ontario's economy will grow by almost 5% this year—its best showing in a decade. With job markets sizzling, confidence brimming and personal income-tax burdens on the decline, Ontario consumers are in a spending mood." Accordingly, we have the most flourishing economy, as I indicated, not only in Canada but in the western world.

It comes down to this: Tax cuts create jobs. What you're seeing here is legislation that will enshrine—hopefully forever, because the government can always repeal this legislation, although I think it would be highly embarrassing to do so—several principles.

Governments no longer will be able to raise taxes without going to the public and getting their consent. I anticipate that in most cases, if there's a really good reason to do it, the public will say, "All right, we'll go ahead and do it." If there isn't a good reason to do it, the public will say no. The bottom line is that the public will have a say.

The balanced budget provisions will ensure that politicians look at every type of means to balance their budgets. As I've indicated, over the last 40 years, or certainly the last 30 years, governments haven't been prepared to do that. They've spent first and asked questions later.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Before questions and comments, I have a few announcements of interest to the members.

Pursuant to standing order 37(a), the member for Hamilton East has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Premier concerning comments made by the member for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant.

Pursuant to standing order 37(a), the member for Parkdale-High Park has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Education concerning special education funding.

Pursuant to standing order 37(a), the member for Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington has given

notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to her question given by the Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation concerning the safety of seniors in retirement homes in Ontario.

These matters will be debated at 6 pm this evening.

Questions or comments?

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): I'm pleased to respond to the leadoff by the Premier and by the member from Wentworth-Burlington in his new fashionable look and his low-key style of presenting.

I find it of interest that the bill itself, though, would still not take effect until the year 2001, which I guess fits in with the plans of the government and the time in which they would look at balancing the budget.

As most people know, the budget is still not balanced, which in effect means that, again, the government will be borrowing in order to balance that budget. We're still talking about the accumulated debt, which this government has added to significantly. Of course, I haven't heard this mentioned on the other side, but the accumulated debt is essentially like adding to your mortgage at home. If you own a home or part of a home and you have a mortgage, can you imagine adding to that every year? That's what this government has done over the last period of time.

The government talks incessantly about taxes and about balanced budgets, even though it hasn't done it yet. This is another piece that will give the impression of the fiscal responsibility of this government, but of course the other side of the coin is the quality of programs. I would like to ask members on the other side to identify the last time somebody phoned up and said: "You know, I think our educational system is doing far better now than it was before and that our hospitals and our health care system are really more effective than they were before." Those are really the questions that concern a lot of people.

1650

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): I appreciate the opportunity to respond to the comments of the Premier and the member for Wentworth-Burlington.

First of all, with regard to the comments of my colleague from the neighbouring riding of Wentworth-Burlington, let me just say—and I'm going to build on this later when I get an opportunity to speak more fully—that I have a real problem with the idea. I think it shows the mentality of the government in power now when the thing he focuses on as guaranteeing to make this work is that they're going to cut pay. I would take that to mean that somehow cabinet ministers seek to be in cabinet in the Harris government just for the money. Therefore, if you threaten to take away the money—

Interjection.

Mr Christopherson: The member laughs, but that's what you focused on. You said that's the incentive. What I want from ministers of the crown, whatever political party is in power, is to focus on the needs of kids in terms of education; the needs of our citizens in terms of health care; the needs in terms of the disabled community.

I want to hear that those are paramount, not your take-home pay.

With regard to the comments the Premier made, I'd like to correct the record. I'm disappointed that he would leave the record the way he did. He said that revenue dropped while we were in power. If you look at the government's own budget papers, on page 57, it shows that in 1993, government revenue increased by 4.47%; in 1994, revenue increased by 5.42%; in 1995, it increased by 7.46%. In 1996, the year after the Harris government was elected, it dropped by 0.05%. That's the record, that's the accuracy, and I'm disappointed the Premier would leave something different in the minds of the people watching.

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): I'm pleased to comment on the comments made by the member from Wentworth-Burlington and the Premier.

Like the member from Wentworth-Burlington, I too ran in 1995; I too signed the taxpayer pledge; I too was convinced that the problems we faced as a province were as a result of the taxing and spending of the previous 10 years, recognizing the fact that, like a family, one has to be able to pay the bills. I recognized the fact that we were saddling our children and grandchildren with this kind of debt. I think it became clear when we realized and put it in terms of \$1 million per hour, per day; when we recognized that that was the kind of spending we had inherited.

I support the introduction of this bill because I see that we are able to provide for our children and grandchildren by being able to introduce balanced budget legislation.

So much of the discussion in this House centres around issues with regard to government programs. We recognize on this side of the House that there is only one way to provide the kind of support and necessary resources, and that is through a balanced budget.

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): I'm also pleased to respond to the comments from the Premier and the member for Wentworth-Burlington.

I was told early in my political career that if something good happens that I wasn't part of, take credit for it anyway because when things go wrong I'll take the blame for it. I see that the government is following that advice.

I'm not an economist. I don't think I have to be to understand what's going on in my community. The growth in the economy that is being touted, if it has happened, has happened in the greater Toronto area. I would suggest to you there are reasons for it happening and I think the low Canadian dollar had a profound effect on it.

But I also talk to my neighbours, and one of the engines that's driving our economy is the sale of cars, predominantly to the US, but the sale of cars within Canada and in that industry. The people I talk to say their decision to purchase a new car wasn't driven by the fact that they got an extra \$10 a week in their paycheque; it was driven by the 1.9% interest rate, or the 0% interest rate, which is federal-government-driven. That's what is causing people to buy cars, rather than the 15% interest.

I would also challenge someone to prove to me that the average family is indeed better off. All of us campaigned in an election not that long ago and talked to people who said they are now paying fees for garbage that they never paid, they're paying money for their children at school that they never paid before, and they're paying money for delisted drugs. Seniors are concerned that they're paying money for drugs that they never had to pay in the past.

I thought when I first came to Toronto that the way you greet someone in this city is, "Can you give me some spare change?" I didn't experience that 10 years ago on Yonge Street. I experience it every day out here now.

Travel around my riding, see the closed factories, see the 7.8% unemployment rate, and try to convince the unemployed people that Ontario is prospering right now. It can't be done.

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): It gives me pleasure to respond to the great speech both by the member for Wentworth-Burlington and of course the Premier.

It seems to me that when I was a councillor and an alderman many years ago, when the Liberals and the NDP were governing this place, there was a great deal of concern expressed by councils all over Ontario with respect to not just the downloading that was taking place from senior levels of government but to the tax increases that were being imposed.

The most infamous one of those was the commercial concentration tax which was imposed, especially on cities. Some of you may recall the hole-in-the-doughnut syndrome, where investment and jobs were fleeing Metropolitan Toronto because of the commercial concentration tax. That really was the legacy that was left to the new government of Ontario in 1995. We made a commitment that we would never again screw the Ontario taxpayer. We did that in 1995.

I'm very pleased to be speaking in support of this bill today and certainly to support the words and comments of my colleague from Wentworth-Burlington.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Actually, I have two points of order, but the first point—

The Acting Speaker: One at a time.

Mr Gerretsen: OK. The first point of order: Was the language that the member used parliamentary, in your opinion?

The Acting Speaker: Yes.

Mr Gerretsen: My second point: Is it part of the new standing orders that there are five responses to each major speech, and if not, was a mistake made?

The Acting Speaker: I shouldn't wear socks, apparently. Yes, I did make an error.

The member for Wentworth-Burlington.

Mr Skarica: I would like to thank the members for Ottawa Centre, Hamilton West, Prince Edward-Hastings, York North and Scarborough Centre for their contribution to the debate.

I believe it was the member for Prince Edward-Hastings who indicated, "It's not your tax cuts, it's the low Canadian dollar that has made this economic boom in Ontario possible." The low Canadian dollar exists in Quebec and it exists in British Columbia, which is now having an economic disaster, with a government that can be described similarly. The economic boom is not happening in the Maritimes.

The Conference Board of Canada has indicated that clearly the Ontario economy is presently the strongest among the provinces, and it's clearly because we have had a number of economic initiatives that have stimulated investment and economic growth.

1700

I used the film industry because it's a prime example. That was an industry that was failing, that was under severe hardship. Then in 1996 the provincial government used a series of tax credits. What's happened is that that industry has completely turned around and is now flourishing to the point where—most of it's focused in Ontario, as most of it's focused in Toronto, and Toronto is now called Hollywood North and has the third-largest film industry behind New York and Los Angeles. That's partly because of the Canadian dollar; I concede that. But why is it not happening anywhere else in Canada? It's happening here because of a variety of initiatives that the Ontario government has implemented that have allowed that industry to be competitive with our American neighbours. In fact, a lot of the investment in the film industry is coming from the United States.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate.

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): Mr Speaker, we're supposed to indicate who we'll be sharing our time with. I'd like to share my time with the member for Essex and the member for Windsor-St Clair.

I'm pleased to join the debate on Bill 7, the balanced budget legislation. I think it's important to remind ourselves that there are three provinces right now without balanced budget legislation, if I'm not mistaken: PEI, Newfoundland and BC. So this is not exactly a revolutionary thought.

Our party happened to have run on balanced budget legislation in the last two elections. Now, we didn't win, but we ran on implementing balanced budget legislation. We have been supportive of the concept of balanced budget legislation for four years, so this is not something that comes new to us.

Indeed, the province of Quebec recently enacted it. It's of interest to the public to recognize that virtually every other province has balanced its budget. The province of Quebec balanced its budget six months ago. They all balanced their budgets at least a year, if not two years, ahead of Ontario, and virtually every other province has balanced its budget. Ontario is in the unusual position of historically leading the country on financial matters and right now we're essentially going to be one of the last provinces to balance our budget.

I appreciate the comments from the member from Wentworth-Burlington because he acknowledged that the

last balanced budget in Ontario, he said in his remarks, was for the year 1989-90, and that is the case. We always get into a debate here that I think the public's somewhat interested in, but certainly around here we all seem to be interested in it, of what has been the history of balanced budgets in Ontario. I asked the legislative library to research this for us, to try and give us an independent view on it. I asked the question, "When was the last balanced budget in Ontario?" I point this out because my business friends think the Conservatives are the money managers. I give them a trivia question: When was the last time a Conservative government in Ontario balanced a budget? "Well, I don't know." The answer is—and this is from the legislative research library—the last time a Conservative government balanced a budget was in 1969. John Robarts was the Premier and Mr MacNaughton was the Treasurer.

Interjection.

Mr Phillips: You inquire about the date of the last balanced budget. Mr Runciman's barracking here. In fiscal 1989-90—and this was the point that the Conservative member just made—the province of Ontario recorded a surplus. The Liberal Party was in power at that time. Previous to that, the budget was balanced during fiscal 1969-70, when the Conservatives were in power.

I just point this out—the Conservative member from Wentworth-Burlington pointed it out as well—because it's a myth that the Conservatives have balanced the budget. In fact, I look back at when Premier Harris was in the previous Conservative administration, when he was in the cabinet in here, and the deficits were going up. The last year they were in power, the deficit in Ontario in 1985 was over \$3 billion.

The reason for going through this is to say that Premier Harris went through four years as the Premier of this province and never balanced a budget. The debt of the province of Ontario over his time—and for the people of Ontario this is, I think, of substantial interest. He took the debt of the province of Ontario up \$21 billion in his first four years. The people may be able to see this; they can certainly get it when they look at the budget. It went from \$88 billion to \$109 billion, and this year, apparently, it's going to go up another \$4 billion.

A measurement of the debt is what's called the debt to gross domestic product, which is a measurement of how much debt you're at in the province. When Premier Harris became Premier, the debt to GDP was 28.8%. Today, according to the government's own documents, it's 31.9%. Let's accept the evidence that the Conservative member presented to us, and that is that the last time a Conservative government balanced a budget in the province of Ontario, the Premier of the day was Premier Robarts. In the last four years, Premier Harris has added to the debt of the province \$21 billion, and you add another \$4 billion this year.

I think another independent evaluation of this is the credit rating agencies. I remember Premier Harris, then the leader of the Conservative Party, sat right in here

somewhere, and Premier Rae sat there. When the credit rating of the province of Ontario was dropping and it went from AAA to AA+ to AA to AA-, Premier Harris railed when he was in opposition at the then Premier, Mr Rae.

Guess what, everybody? Four years later—Premier Harris has been in power for four years—the four major credit rating agencies didn't touch Ontario's credit rating, the same credit rating. The reason I raise this is that, yes, there is balanced budget legislation coming in now. It will require the government, after six years in office, to balance the budget. We will be behind the federal government by five years, we'll be behind Quebec by four years, and virtually every other province will have balanced the books.

The other thing to remind ourselves of, before I get into discussing some of the details of the bill, is what is driving the Ontario economy. I think without question it is exports. For me, the most startling number in the 1999 budget was the number that pointed out the importance of exports to the Ontario economy. What it said here is that in 1989, 27.5% of Ontario's gross domestic product was represented by exports—around 28%. That was in 1989. Eight years later, 1998, it was 49%. Without a question of a doubt, the engine driving Ontario's economy is exports. Other things have been helpful, but the centrepiece of what's driving Ontario's economy is exports. If we don't all know that and know why that happened and know how we keep that, we run the risk of undermining the very thing that drives Ontario's economy. I don't think there's another area in the world that relies as heavily on exports as Ontario does. By the way, 90% is to the US, and that's good, and the majority of that, over 50%, is auto.

The reason I raise that is that as we move forward on both our spending priorities and tax policies, I think we should realize why the auto companies like to locate here in Ontario. It's because we have a high-quality work force; it is because we are located clearly in an advantageous position. There's an old saying that Toronto is closer to more major US cities than any major US city is, and when you think about that, it's true. That's why the rail lines from New York to Chicago go through Ontario.

1710

But a key reason they locate here is because of health care. We fund our health care in a different way than the US does. Health costs for employees here in Canada are dramatically lower for our auto business than they are in the US. That is one of the key reasons they locate plants here. But we're heading down a road of Americanizing our health care system and I think that runs the risk of undermining our exports.

I want to talk about some of the details of the bill. There are two parts to this bill, as Ontario will come to recognize. There's the balanced budget portion of it and there's the taxpayer portion. The balanced budget portion essentially says that a government must balance its books on a four-year cycle, that future governments can use

surpluses from the three previous years to balance its books if they run into an economic downturn.

I think that makes sense, frankly. Being able to accumulate surpluses over a three-year period and use that in the event of a slight economic downturn makes sense. It gives future governments some flexibility in managing their affairs over a four-year period. That running four-year total—it just keeps running forward—makes sense.

One thing I would say on this section, though, is that I have some concerns about the accounting policies and the impact they have on the finances of the province. I'll just signal now my concern about some of the accounting practices of the government that I think will come back to haunt us.

We are essentially, in Ontario, putting all the school capital debt on to the books of our school boards. They have no money-raising authority, but the debt is hidden off the province's books on to school boards. The province of Ontario has historically spent \$400 million a year on capital. They now are saying to the school boards, "You keep spending that money, but that debt's going to go on your books and we will simply give you a cheque every year to cover the interest and principal on that." I call that a perpetual debt-creating machine, which is what it is. That's going to come back to haunt us, as is the way we are funding hospital construction now, where that is moving increasingly to essentially the province funding the principal and interest payments but no longer funding the capital.

Of interest to people if they want to get into it, in the provincial books in the last fiscal year, the one that just ended, the year ending March 31, 1999, Ontario spent, laid out in cash, \$1.3 billion for pension payments. That's the amount of cash that was paid out to the teachers' pension and to the OPSEU pension. We actually recorded on our financial statement, the one in the budget, minus \$100 million; we said we took \$100 million out of the pension. That is a \$1.4-billion swing in the cash. That too will eventually come back to haunt us.

I think the 407 sale was a huge mistake, and I said it at the time. I said two things on that. One is that the government actually gave us assurance here in the Legislature that they would not sell it off at 99 years, because that was the rumour. We heard the rumour that they were going to sell it off for 99 years, and they said, "No, no, we're going to sell this for 29, 30 years." The huge mistake, particularly, I might add, for anybody who's ever going to have to use the 407—if I'm in a big rush I'll lay out the cash, but otherwise I'll make my way slowly along the 401. But here's what's happened on the 407. Premier Harris pocketed an extra \$1.6 billion, because he sold it off at twice what it cost to build. How did they do that? Because they said, "We're going to sell it for 99 years." They said that whoever buys this will be able to take the tolls up at inflation plus 2% every year for 15 years, and they said, "If somebody doesn't pay you for those tolls, we won't renew their licence."

The reason I raise this is that some of these things are going to come back to haunt us. There's the pension

issue, the putting the school capital on to school boards' books. Credit rating agencies, believe me, will say: "Listen, they have essentially no money-raising capabilities. That's your debt; that's not their debt."

That's, on the one portion of the bill, the questions.

On the second portion of the bill, the tax portion, we had a briefing yesterday from the staff of the Ministry of Finance, and there are some still unanswered questions about the bill. The bill apparently excludes several taxes. We were told yesterday that if it isn't specifically mentioned it's excluded. We asked, "What's excluded?" They said they would give us a list, but certainly I gather tobacco tax is excluded, racetrack tax is excluded, land transfer tax is excluded, mining tax is excluded, and there may be some other things that are excluded. It will be interesting to find out the things that are excluded.

We asked the question yesterday on a portion of the bill that says—this is on page 6 of the bill, paragraph 1 of subsection 5(1); this is where you do not need a referendum on a tax—"The increase or the new tax is not designed to generate a net increase in the total amount of provincial revenues and revenue raised for school purposes under the Education Act." We asked if, for example, the federal government were to cut its transfer payments by \$1 billion to the province of Ontario, or if a casino were to close, or if there was a substantial change in revenue, does that mean you don't need a referendum to replace that revenue? We were told that was the case, and I'll make that assumption, that that is the case.

We are also told—and this part of the bill makes sense to me—that there is the flexibility. If a government says, "We want to change our tax policy; we want to eliminate one tax and recover that revenue from another tax," that is quite permissible within the bill, and I think that is helpful and correct.

There is a part of the bill that does provide for governments to respond in the case of a significant economic downturn. Again the member for Wentworth-Burlington mentioned this, the 5% decline in revenue that did occur in 1990-91. This bill would permit a government to try and find a way to recoup that in the case of a significant economic downturn, and I think that's important.

There is an unanswered part of the bill that the staff were unable to clarify for us. That is, in the event of a referendum, who is responsible for the referendum? Is it the political party, or is it the government? The bill is not at all clear on that, and it will be something we are still awaiting clarification on to better understand what the intent of the government is in this bill. As one would read the bill right now, it appears almost as if it's the intent of the government that it is the political party in power, not the government in power that has the responsibility for carriage of a referendum. We asked that question and we are still awaiting an answer on it.

1720

Just to begin to summarize my remarks, I'd like to highlight my opening comment, and that is that balanced budget legislation is not completely new ground in this country. It is, in varying forms, in virtually every other

province except PEI, Newfoundland and BC. The facts would point out that this is a government that, while it purports to have managed the finances well—I would simply say that when this government came into power the federal government had a deficit of \$42 billion and the rest of the provinces cumulatively had a deficit of about \$10 billion. Last year, the federal government ran a surplus of \$3 billion, the other provinces ran a surplus of around \$3 billion and Ontario continued to run a deficit.

That's why we say that we did borrow the money for the tax cut—there's no question. Somebody says revenue continued to grow. Yes, and you see it federally. We would have had a balanced budget last year or the year before, without a question of a doubt. Premier Harris would say, "We need the tax cut to stimulate the economy." I say that if you look at what drove the Ontario economy, it's exports. There's no trick. You can borrow money to give a tax cut, but we're paying debt, we're paying a lot of money to fund that.

It happened that it worked for Premier Harris, in the sense that he got re-elected. But the numbers speak for themselves. The last time there was a balanced budget by a Conservative government was in 1969-70, when Robarts was Premier. Premier Harris has already added, without a question of a doubt, \$21 billion—and at the end of this fiscal year it'll be \$24 billion—to the debt of the province. The credit rating agencies continue to give him the same rating they gave Bob Rae. We have paid a substantial price on the interest on that. So I don't think it's time for him to pat himself on the back. I think it's time to recognize that we have added an enormous amount to the debt of this province.

The specifics on the bill: There are some unanswered questions. How will the referendum be run? There are some questions on the accounting. Particularly, I might add—I go back to what I said earlier—I think there are some very significant accounting problems in the way the government's reporting the finances now. It will be only a matter of one or two years before they come back to haunt us—the school capital, the hospital capital and the pensions.

If we ever use the 407 as a model for our future private-public sector partnerships, we will have done the Ontario people a huge disservice. Poor people who are going to have to use the 407 for the next 99 years have been frankly sold down the road. They're going to be paying a premium. Figure this out: Ontario got an extra \$1.6 billion just by doing all those things. If someone wants a rate of return on \$1.6 billion of 7%, they're going to be paying about \$120 million a year more just to service that in tolls. So I feel badly for the future users of the 407 and I hope we don't use that as a model for the SuperBuild fund.

I look forward to the debate on Bill 7 and look forward to receiving some explanations from the government on the issues we've raised.

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): I want to compliment my colleague from Scarborough-Agincourt because he always seems to be able to put things into some per-

spective. It's interesting the way he raises those red flags, for example, the things that are going to come back to haunt us. If any of us think that we're totally immune from that kind of thing, they should listen to Gerry Phillips from Scarborough-Agincourt, because there are lots of things in legislation.

In fact, we have some examples over the last government, from 1995 to 1999, where there were pieces of legislation that were poorly drafted and consequently led to some trouble with the government.

Mr Gerretsen: Seven tax bills.

Mr Crozier: I'm reminded by the member from Kingston and The Islands that we had to have seven tax bills to straighten things out, and I'm not so sure they're straightened out yet. In fact, at our briefing yesterday, my colleague from Scarborough-Agincourt had to point out to the officials who gave us the briefing that there was in fact an error in this piece of legislation right here, so that's going to have to be corrected.

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): Isn't that the second time they've done it?

Mr Crozier: Yes, second time they've done it. They have all kinds of time to look at it and, lo and behold—I can't find it right now, because it's rather incidental, but it's just proof that not only can you—

Interjection.

Mr Crozier: The minister says, "We make mistakes." That's kind of what we're saying, to be careful, that there are some mistakes in this. Do you know what they often say?

Interjection.

Mr Crozier: The government whip knows that I'm not an arrogant person. He'll come and tell me that later, I'm sure, because he and I were both born and raised in Essex county, and I can't think of an arrogant person in Essex county. Of course some of the arrogant people have moved out, and now the government whip lives somewhere near Toronto.

I just want to say that I certainly have confidence in what the member from Scarborough-Agincourt has said. He has certainly put us on warning for what we might expect as we go down the road on this piece of legislation.

I want to point out as well that our party has supported balanced budget legislation since the 1995 campaign. In the 1999 campaign, just recently past, we also pledged support for balanced budget legislation because we, along with both the senior government and other provincial governments in Canada, believe of course, as the people do, that they're sending enough tax money to government, and to municipal governments for that matter, and that it's the job of the government to manage the money that's sent to them.

In the case of the provincial government, all the people are asking is that when you manage the money of the province you do it so that we get the best bang for our dollar and that we do that primarily—and I think most importantly to the people of Ontario—in the areas of health care and education.

We could go on at some length about the problems we have in health care. This government says, "Well, those are problems that have resulted from the last 10 years." You've forgotten that of the last 10 years you own four of those. So of the last 10 years that you keep speaking of, four of them were—

Interjection.

Mr Crozier: I sat here in the House last night and I heard it again today. You repeat "the last 10 years." Well, four of them are yours, so I just want you to take that responsibility. I said last night that I don't mind that they brag about the things that are good. I have absolutely no problem with that, but what does bother me a bit is when you won't take responsibility for the things that aren't right yet and there again we can refer to health care and education.

Mike Harris has kind of given the indication that maybe the future of the province really isn't important to him, that although he speaks differently, he doesn't mind borrowing money in order to balance the budget. As part of their rhetoric on revenues, they'll also point to the federal government as having reduced transfer payments. Without going into a long explanation, because it's a matter of public record, look at the tax points that have been transferred to Ontario. You'll find that some \$2 billion in transfer payments that were reduced were made up in tax points. I would go on record as saying today, if you'll look up that information, you'll find that you really didn't lose any net revenue because you gained it in tax points. We've had a buoyant economy and those tax points, then, pay for themselves.

1730

We've talked about balanced budgets in the past, we've talked about debt in the past and we've talked about the boasting of this government as being great money managers. Well, I'd like the people who may be watching to think about this: The total debt is somewhere between \$115 billion and \$120 billion. Let's say it's \$115 billion, to give you the benefit of the doubt. Of that \$115 billion of total debt that's been accumulated over time, the Liberal government, when it was in power, was responsible for \$5 billion of it. So we're down to \$110 billion of total debt. Then we go to the NDP who, it has again been mentioned today, went through some tough economic times, and maybe some decisions weren't correct. As the Minister of Labour pointed out, we all make mistakes. We'll say that the NDP were responsible for about \$12 billion. So of the total debt in the province of Ontario, what does that leave the Conservative governments over time, including this one, responsible for? It's \$98 billion of the accumulated debt.

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): No, no. It's \$12 billion a year for five years. Do the math.

Mr Crozier: They increased the debt, we're told, maybe \$20 billion. That will pick up the other \$5 billion that I gave you credit for.

My point here is that these great money managers are responsible for, by far, the greatest amount of the public

debt. And what do they do? They continue to borrow, and accumulate that debt.

My friend says: "No, we didn't borrow any money to increase the debt. In fact, our revenue has increased." As I pointed out, part of the reason revenue increased is because of tax points that you got. But the fact of the matter is that our total debt is significantly higher now than it was when this government was first brought into office in 1995.

We are debating a bill that was promised by this government in 1995. I recall, and I'm sure many of the people of Ontario will recall, that in the 1995 election campaign, the Common Sense Revolution document made a commitment to balance the budget in its first mandate. The Common Sense Revolution, as a matter of interest, didn't mention balanced budget legislation or tax referenda. It just said, "We promise you, the taxpayers of Ontario, that we'll balance the budget in our first mandate."

We all know they didn't do it. We're now debating a promise that was made back in 1995. In fact, the Premier, during that 1995 election campaign, staged a media event which promised taxpayer protection legislation and balanced budget legislation. It didn't say it in the Common Sense Revolution, but during the campaign, when the pressure was on, the Premier made that promise. In fact, at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre, on May 30, 1995, Premier Harris, then the leader of the third party, signed a pledge that read like this:

"1. Make any increase in existing tax rates subject to approval by the voters of Ontario in a binding referendum.

"2. Require the elimination of Ontario's operating and capital deficits within at least five years, along with interim deficit targets for each of those years.

"3. Contain 'pay for performance' ministerial salary penalties for the Premier and cabinet ministers if interim deficit targets are not met."

That pledge was signed by Mike Harris on May 30, 1995.

It didn't happen. We hear a lot about promises made, promises kept. Well, there was a huge promise that was made in 1995 that wasn't kept, but we're debating it today.

Did you know that the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, I believe it was, admonished the Premier during the 1999 election, saying, "Who can trust someone like that?" I don't blame them. Perhaps the pressure has come on again to finally bring in, in the year 1999, after the last election, a promise that was made in 1995.

At the outset, I said that we too, the Liberal Party, promised something in the 1995 election campaign that I would like to read to you. We made a strong commitment at that time on both balanced budget legislation and taxpayer protection. What Dalton McGuinty, the leader of the Ontario Liberal Party, at that time pledged was to pass balanced budget legislation ensuring the government lives within its means; to guarantee funding of no less than \$20.9 billion in health care and \$14.3 billion in

education; and to pass taxpayer protection legislation within the first 100 days, making any increase in existing tax rates, or a new rate, subject to approval by voters in a binding referendum. That was in our platform, both taxpayer protection legislation as well as balanced budget legislation.

Where are we today? Because of the Harris government's mismanagement, I would suggest, Ontario's provincial debt is now 26% higher than it was when the Tories took office four years ago. The government has added somewhere around \$20 billion in debt, which, when spoken in terms of what it means to the individual, is \$8,000 in new debt for every Ontario family, and that was after he promised to balance the budget back in 1995. In fact, according to this legislation that we have before us, this government doesn't really have to balance the budget until the year 2001. It's more than a year and a half from now before the Premier and his cabinet will have to make this great sacrifice of reduced salaries.

I want to talk for the next few minutes about the referenda part of this legislation. Like my colleague from Scarborough-Agincourt, I'm willing to raise a flag. I'd be willing to bet—and those who know me know I'm not a gambling person—that this referenda part of the legislation will never be acted on. I don't think there is going to be a referendum, but if there is, I want the people of Ontario to understand what that really means. What it means is that you're going to have a referendum that will cost in the neighbourhood of—we weren't able to get an exact figure from the bureaucrats yesterday, but we suspect it would be a cost of around \$50 million just to ask the question. But as important as the total cost of the referendum is who is going to pay for it; another question that couldn't be answered yesterday.

You'll recall not too long ago—in fact I think it started last year about this time—this government spent upwards of \$100 million in advertising leading up to the last election. They spent \$100 million telling us how great our health care system is supposed to be. They spent upwards of \$100 million, which included advertising, to tell us how great our education system is. And that was taxpayers' money. What they can't tell us at this time is that if the government does want to pose a referendum question, who is going to pay to promote it? Is the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario going to pay their share of promoting the question that's on the referendum? I doubt it. I suspect what's going to happen is that the government of Ontario, who represents the taxpayers of Ontario, is going to take that money out of the pockets of Ontarians and put it towards promoting their referendum.

1740

Not only do I suggest that there's not going to be a referendum, that this is not going to be used, but that if it is, the taxpayers of the province are going to pay heavily for it. That's even adding insult to injury, because if the taxpayer has to pay to have it promoted, what are they paying for? They're paying for a question that's going to increase their taxes, so they get a double whammy. If anybody over there can answer that question, as to

whether the government will put any money into promoting a referendum question, I'd appreciate it, and perhaps as we get further on in the debate that question may be answered.

What this legislation also says, and I think we have to be careful, is that the Lieutenant Governor in Council will determine what the question will be. Folks at home may not completely understand what the Lieutenant Governor in Council is. What it is, is the government. The government will decide what the question is. Yes, the legislation provides for the question to be sent to the Chief Election Officer. The Chief Election Officer can comment on the question, but the final decision as to what the question is going to be lies with the government—of course, Speaker, I use the term “lies” in the appropriate way. It may lead to something else that sounds a lot like that, but far be it for me to suggest that this really would be the result of it.

There's a fair amount of wriggle room in this legislation too. On the surface it reads just great: An Act to protect taxpayers against tax increases, to establish a process requiring voter approval for proposed tax increases and to ensure that the Provincial Budget is a balanced budget. There's an awful lot of wriggle room in this. We know, for example, as was pointed out by my colleague from Scarborough-Agincourt, that if in any other area of revenue there is a decrease, the government can raise taxes without the question of referenda.

One thing that's good about this piece of legislation is that the government can't transfer taxation power to another jurisdiction. In other words, they can't turn around and say to the municipalities, “We can't increase taxes to pay for transportation or health care or education, but you can.” At least there is some protection that way. But what happens is if there are decreases in revenue in other areas, the government then can increase taxes. In fact, it's done under the absolute authority of the minister.

I'd like to read from the bill, subsection 5(2):

“If no referendum is required by virtue of subsection (1)—that's the one where there are decreases from other areas of government—the minister shall prepare a statement indicating that, in his or her opinion, a specified circumstance listed in ...”—and this is where the drafting was wrong; it named the wrong subsection—“exists and shall lay the statement before the assembly or give it to the Clerk of the assembly before the applicable bill is introduced in the assembly or the applicable regulation or requisition is made.”

Here comes the gripper—and we've seen this kind of authority given to ministers; we've seen this kind of arrogance in bills that have been passed up until now, over the past four years, where ministers are given sweeping authority. This is the crux of this. The minister lays the statement before the assembly or gives it to the Clerk of the assembly.

(3) The minister's statement is, for all purposes, conclusive evidence of the matters addressed in it.

“(4) The minister's statement is not reviewable by any court or tribunal.”

How arrogant can you get?

The Minister of Finance can stand before this Legislature and say, “I'm going to raise your taxes because,” and no court, no tribunal or the Legislature can do a thing about it. That's just not taxpayer protection, in my view; that's arrogance. That's saying: “I'm right. It doesn't matter whether you have an opinion. It doesn't matter whether you can make a case. There's nobody to present your opinion or your case to.” If that's taxpayer protection, you can have it.

I like that, along with other governments across the country, we're all striving to have balanced budgets, to all live within our means. But when somebody uses the words “taxpayer protection” and then says, “The minister's statement is not reviewable by any court or tribunal,” that's about as arrogant as you can get. “I'm untouchable.” That's what the Minister of Finance is under this piece of legislation; he's untouchable.

I want the taxpayers of Ontario to ask themselves about the idea of referenda. It doesn't matter how much it costs; it doesn't matter who's going to have to pay for it. Just ask this question of yourselves: You elected a government that you sent to Queen's Park to be responsible for the next four or five years of their mandate. What you're saying, then, is if they get into a tough spot and they want to lay the blame on someone else, we'll have a referendum. That referendum is going to cost you \$50 million and that referendum is going to be paid for by you.

Just think about those things that the member for Scarborough-Agincourt said; think about a few of these.

It's my pleasure to pass this on to the member for Windsor-St Clair.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): As always, it's a pleasure to follow my colleague from Essex and my other colleagues, including our Finance critic, Gerry Phillips.

It's important to note that the Ontario Liberal Party has for a number of years supported balanced budget legislation. Indeed, in the last two elections we have campaigned on that. We share the view that many people in this province do, that it's appropriate, provided there are opportunities over periods of time, to accumulate a surplus when times are good so that governments do have some flexibility. To that extent we are pleased with that aspect of this particular bill. Let me say to my colleagues opposite that I will, as are my colleagues on this side in the Liberal Party, be voting in favour of this particular bill.

We agree that this aspect of the bill is important. We find the part of the bill that deals with referenda more troublesome but again, on balance, we think it's the appropriate legislation.

I wanted to take a few minutes to talk about what problems we see in the bill and say very clearly that when we become a government in three years' time—or

sooner—there will be changes to make the legislation better.

I listened attentively as the Premier earlier this afternoon put his position with respect to the government's record in terms of debt reduction, deficits and job creation. If one listened only to the Premier, we would think the prosperity that Ontario is enjoying today—a prosperity, by the way, that's not equally shared by all people in this province, but it's a prosperity that's there—was all the result of the Harris government's actions and initiatives.

I think most thoughtful people out there understand that in fact it's due to the hard work and efforts of working people, of other governments, of people who invest in our economy. Indeed, for somebody to try to claim credit for this singly or individually really is the height of arrogance. It's almost laughable. The growth that we've seen in the US economies, the Canadian economies, is the result of a variety of factors.

1750

That being said, there was still a need in 1995 to bring a sense of responsibility and a sense of change to Queen's Park. The mismanagement of the previous government, second in my view to none in the history of this country, is a mismanagement that the government of the day has paid for in two successive elections.

Let's talk about deficits and debt. Under the Harris regime, Ontario's debt has risen 26% in four years. They've borrowed a lot of money, about \$20 billion, I think. I may be a little high on that figure. But I'd like to say that they are the second-last government in Canada to balance the books, despite their protestations about being good fiscal and financial managers. Only Ontario and British Columbia have not balanced their books. I don't think I would be bragging about that at the top of my lungs.

Let's look at Ottawa, for instance, where the budget has now been balanced for I think two years in a prudent and careful policy that first eliminated the deficit and will now turn its attention to program investments and to tax cuts. There will be a balance. We haven't had that kind of balance here. What we've had is severe and deep cuts in programs. We think of hospitals, in the first instance. The Premier said in the leaders' debate in 1995, "Robert, it's not my intention to close any hospitals."

Mrs McLeod: I remember that.

Mr Duncan: My colleague from Fort William, I'm sure, well remembers that. We certainly remember that comment and we certainly appreciated the tenor of the comment.

What about cuts to education, classroom spending? Today in the House we're going to be having a late show on special-needs funding for kids, not to mention the education funding formula. Let me say that had the government proceeded more cautiously on the tax cut side, a tax cut, frankly, where there isn't a lot of evidence to suggest that it has contributed to the growth—we see many jurisdictions, and I think perhaps the United States is a good example, where there haven't been those kinds

of tax cuts at the federal and/or the state level in many instances, yet we've seen growth of similar patterns. On a national level, due to the foresight and good management of that government, we have seen growth in this economy that has not been accompanied by those kind of tax cuts.

Does that mean we're against tax cuts? Absolutely not. The Premier would have you believe, based on experiences in the 1980s and way back then, that perhaps all we want to do is raise taxes. The Premier even—I guess he was in a bit of a humourous mood—wanted to suggest, of course falsely suggested, that it's in our party's constitution that we believe in raising taxes. We appreciate the give and take of debate, as does anybody, but let me say this: We will be voting for this bill because we, having been the last government to balance a budget in Ontario, in 1989—

Interjections.

Mr Duncan: They want to deny it and the other party over there wants to deny it and try to lay blame for everything that went wrong in those years, but the fact is, according to the government's own books, that's the last time the budget was.

What we saw in that period, not unlike what we've seen in the last four years, was a steady decline, anyway you measure it, of the deficit relative to GDP, relative to any number of factors. What we didn't see was the growth in the debt that we've seen in the last four years. I would suggest to my colleagues that the Harris government's record of increasing the debt is second only to the NDP's record, not one that I would be particularly proud of.

I say to the Minister of Transportation, who laughs about highway situations in Ontario and doesn't want to deal with his own government's books, that your debt has gone up. You've raised the debt almost as quickly as our colleagues in the other party over there did. That's not the kind of record you ought to be proud of, and it doesn't stack up well.

My colleague from Scarborough, Mr Phillips, reminds continually that between 1969 and 1985 successive Conservative governments were unable to balance the budget. That's most unfortunate. Of course, when they talk about the 10 lost years, they don't want to talk about those lost years. So I think it's—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Timmins-James Bay, you're not in your seat. You also used some unparliamentary language and I wish you to withdraw that.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I withdraw.

Mr Duncan: We believe and continue to believe that tax cuts are appropriate at the right time, in the context of a balanced budget and in the context of a recognition that our hospitals require more funding, that our schools require more funding. Our highways have been so badly neglected by this government. I would suggest that the people in Ontario who are listening to this, the people in my community who witnessed the tragedy—days after the Minister of Transportation suggested the ride along

the 401 between Windsor and London was a pleasant drive, my community witnessed a massive traffic accident that shouldn't have happened.

The government plays fast and loose with figures. They try to compare 1988 dollars with 1998 dollars, and it doesn't wash. I would suggest that while we're prepared and will support this bill—and I'll be voting for this bill—that the more prudent approach would have been to: first, balance the budget; second, look at what your community needs are; and, third, select a mix of tax cuts that will benefit people right across the province and in a variety of ways.

I would suggest to the government members and to the Premier that you have mismanaged the file. Growth in the economy could have been much stronger. The crisis in our hospitals, the crisis in our schools and the crisis on our roads—the crisis in our hospitals and schools was precipitated, I understand, by the mismanagement of the NDP government, five years of absolutely inept management. They went from 72 seats to 17 seats, to 9 seats. One can understand their frustration tonight here in this chamber.

I would suggest to the government members that the appropriate policy on the economy, the appropriate way to deal with this—we could have balanced our budget two or three years ago, and we could have done it without the massive cuts to health care and education that we've witnessed. We could have done that. Instead, we did a questionable tax cut, one that the government's proud of, I understand, but one that we fundamentally oppose. The appropriate response would be to balance the budget, to make sure our schools and our hospitals are properly and appropriately funded, and to choose a range of tax cuts once you're not adding to the debt.

1800

In conclusion, I would suggest that while we're prepared to support this particular legislation, the problem we see is in the mismanagement of this and in the mismanagement of the government's financial policies. The government laughs, but these policies will come back to haunt you. They are in our hospitals today. The cuts that were started by the NDP, you've continued on. The cuts to our schools that were started by the NDP, you've carried on. You haven't done as good a job, frankly, at cutting them as they did, and certainly you've enjoyed more labour peace than they did in the last two years of their regime.

In voting for this bill we are reaffirming the position we took in 1995 and the position we took in 1999. We are more troubled by the first section of the bill, which deals with referenda. We'll vote for that because we believe the government has left—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Pursuant to standing order 37, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made. The member for Parkdale-High Park has given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given today by the Minister of Education. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter and the minister, or parliamentary assistant, may reply for up to five minutes.

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): I'll be sharing some of my time with the member for Essex, who shared in the question that we tried to ask today on behalf of special needs students across the province but also on behalf of students across the province, because the minister today neglected to address the problem that she and her ministry and her government are directly responsible for, and that's the underfunding of education.

Most conspicuously, some of the members opposite have not been fulsome in putting forward the case of their constituents because it is not just about special needs kids, it's about all kids. The funding formula is first being played out in terms of specific needs for the children, for example, we brought in last week, who came to us with their parents saying, "Why should we, parents of special needs kids, have to be singled out?" In the one case, someone who was not able to come to school had to come to the Legislature instead to be given access to school.

We have some of the Conservative members from the Hamilton area blaming the board. Again today we had the minister trying to claim, without foundation at all, that somehow the boards have the money, that they just lack the will and the ability. This is where this incredible claim on the part of the minister and on the part of the members of the government caucus in the Hamilton area has hoisted the educational future of 550 children in the Hamilton area and, as we raised again today, 210 children just in the area adjacent, in Haldimand-Norfolk.

This lack of responsibility is what has caused us to be here tonight to discuss this issue further. The minister will well know that the supervisory officials of this province made an unprecedented statement about her lack of handling of this issue, of the fumbling of the educational needs of special needs children, of how that has caused the cannibalization of other programs in the boards, of how teachers have had to take it upon themselves to do what this government should have done, tried to get the things that these students need. When they do that, they do it at the expense of the other students. So this is at a direct cost.

The minister today tried to say that there's more money. The supervisory officials said clearly that there is no way to make that claim. They said there are more special needs kids without proper supports this year than before this minister's funding formula was in place. The superintendents of the boards from across this province,

including many of the boards represented by the members opposite, said that in black and white. It's shameful that there aren't more of the members opposite prepared to stand up and talk to their minister and say: "These kids deserve an education. The ripple effect it's having on the rest of the children in the education system is serious; it needs to be dealt with now."

Instead, we had the shame of the members from the Hamilton area allowing students to stay out of school for up to eight weeks. The same thing is happening in Brantford, the same thing is happening in the rest of Haldimand-Norfolk and the same thing is happening in board after board across the province, as my colleague the member for Essex will tell you.

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): Minister, I appreciate the time you're taking to come here late this afternoon. I just want to point out, and not in an adversarial way, that you have a letter dated October 20 from the Greater Essex County District School Board that points out a shortfall in their special education funding of \$2.5 million. They point out in their letter, "We hope to again revisit the ISA funding." That's the intensive support funding.

I attended a forum at Villanova high school last week conducted by the Windsor-Essex Catholic District School Board, at which time they pointed out that they are some \$2 million short. What they point out in part is that the intensive support dollars do not cover the salary and benefit costs of an education assistant. Additional students with special needs will continue to register with the board, and we do not have funds to meet those needs.

I pointed out one example, that of Denise Dupis and her 11-year-old son. The question there is that the boards can't make up for these fundings because you've frozen the ISA funding. What choice are you giving families like the Dupises? Is your message that there's no room for the young lad, Bobby, in school, and are you treating this with urgency?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education): Thank you to the honourable member for Essex. I appreciate his concern and the time that he has spent on this. Many members of the caucus here on this side of the House, for example the members for Stoney Creek and Wentworth-Burlington in the Hamilton area, have certainly been very vocal on this issue as well.

I think what's very important here is that there is room in these schools, and there should be room in these schools, for children with special needs, because they deserve an education as well. That is why our government has taken so seriously the need to improve the way that special education is provided in this province. For example, we are spending today more than has ever been spent in Ontario, \$1.2 billion, on special education. This is funding that has increased this year and increased last year to give the boards additional resources. When you look at some of these boards, they have had significant increases in their resource to meet special education needs. For example, the Windsor-Essex Catholic board has seen a 53% increase in their special education funding.

We recognize the money needs to grow with enrolment, and it has done that, but I think what's also important to recognize here is that there's a dual obligation in this.

We as the province have made a commitment to develop an appropriate policy that has responded to what we've heard from boards and from parents. We have indeed done that. We've been asked for more money. We've done that. We've been asked for money that recognized high needs. We've done that. We were asked for money that protected the base funding. We've done that. They needed flexible money. We've done that for the boards as well.

They also asked for a year of stability, which is this year, so that we could sit down, as we are doing, and go over the data from the boards on the ISA money to see what exactly is happening, what are the needs and how we can better meet those needs, because we do recognize that this is a significant change. We've been cognizant of the fact that it has taken boards some time to do this. Some boards have reported that they've had some difficulty getting students identified to qualify for the funding. We understand that. But to sit there and say that somehow or other nothing has been done, nothing is happening to respond to this, I think is quite frankly inaccurate and not true.

As I said, there's a dual obligation for us to develop an appropriate policy, to provide more funding. I believe we have the correct policy, the fundamentals. The feedback we've been hearing from boards and from the Education Improvement Commission is that the way that money goes to boards is appropriate but that there may need to be changes. We recognize and acknowledge that and are working at doing that. But there is also a dual obligation for those boards.

1810

For example, I find it not helpful, not acceptable for a board to send students home. I understand that there may be disagreements about funding; there may be things that we need to argue out between the ministry and the boards. That has happened in every previous government that I've ever had any experience with and I'm sure it will happen in future governments, as boards and governments always argue over how much money. That's part of the process. But to send those children home, to not give them supports and help, I don't think was an acceptable or a helpful response by the Hamilton board in this particular circumstance, with all due respect to them. Those children deserve help; they need help. I met with the parents who were here last week, to talk to them about this, and those students do need that help. That is the obligation of the boards. They are the ones who have the responsibility to deliver this service, who have the trustees elected by the community to give them the guidance in how they deliver those services.

So we're prepared to continue to work with the boards to find ways to take the increased money, to make it work better, to find ways to make the policy work better so that these young students get the supports they need.

But it has to be a two-way street. We've provided them with things they've asked for. We are asking them to provide the education to those students. If we have disputes, let's have those disputes, but let's not do it by sending children home, because I don't think that's appropriate.

MEMBER'S COMMENTS

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): The member for Hamilton East has given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given today by the Premier. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter and the parliamentary assistant may reply for up to five minutes.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): I rise as a follow-up to the question to the Premier today in regard to the comments made by the member from Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant, MPP Toby Barrett, who is also the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of the Environment.

This is a very serious matter, as it is not an isolated comment. It is the framing of the restructuring debate in a very dangerous, divisive way that we have not seen in this province before as it deals with municipal restructuring.

The comments made by the member were offensive, discriminatory and insulting to all Ontarians, regardless of where you live, regardless of where you come from. This wasn't one comment made by accident or mistake, bad enough as that would be. There's a sequence of events. It started with the comments made in a submission by Mr Barrett's father to the restructuring adviser. He said: "Residents of the old Haldimand are conservative in their spending and rooted in the British tradition, while those in Norfolk are," and I quote, "European immigrants of peasant stock who borrow heavily and expect a substantial profit." That was in the Brantford Expositor.

The member had an opportunity to clarify this, to adjust the record on his own behalf, as the MPP. What did he say to the Hamilton Spectator on October 30? This is Mr Barrett: "There are very significant differences between the two [sides of the region] and the regional census would show that. There is census data and the facts are out there."

So we now have his code words being used to say the same thing, that the regional census would show this. Show what? The comment that his father had made: The division of people from different backgrounds is how we should base it, and that's how restructuring should happen in that particular region. I don't think anybody in this House would for a second agree with that. Mr Barrett, the member, goes on to say: "There's so many differences between the two counties and part of that is that it all derives from the soil structure. Haldimand is clay and Norfolk is sandy. It really has had an influence on the makeup of the people."

It gets better; it continues. Today in the Toronto Star, Mr Barrett, the member, again: "There is no question

there has been an invisible [ethnic] boundary between the two counties ...; 25 years ago there was a forced marriage and it just didn't work out."

These are comments made by a member of the Legislature about his own constituents, talking about a way of dividing a region due to restructuring.

What is sad today is that the Premier, although he took a step in the right direction by totally distancing himself—rightly so—and his government from the comments made by that member, didn't take the next step. The next step was simply to discipline the member. The member has not had the courage yet to apologize for those comments. The Premier had an opportunity to act, and the action would have been to fire that member as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of the Environment. The Premier has the power to do that. He failed miserably to do that today.

Look at the danger. Andrew Dreschel, a columnist in the Hamilton Spectator, put it best: "Anyone would think he was talking about the political restructuring of the Balkans, not a section of rural southern Ontario."

I understand restructuring debates are emotional everywhere, as they are in my region of Hamilton-Wentworth. That is their nature; when you bring change or potential change, people are going to get emotional about it. But there isn't a place in this province anywhere, in any debate, for comments that discriminate against Ontarians. All Ontarians are equal. All Ontarians, regardless where they came from, should be treated equally. Think in your own region for a second—as the member from Perth is shaking his head. I presume he agrees with the member, and maybe he should tell us that. Maybe that's the first member on the government's side of the House that agrees with Mr Barrett—Mr Johnson does.

Think of it in any community in your own region where you draw ethnic boundary lines. This is not 1800. We live in this province generally in harmony with each other. We respect each other, our traditions and our backgrounds. I believe that Mr Barrett's comments are an insult to all Ontarians regardless where you come from, regardless how long you've been here. Municipal restructuring has to be based on many factors, but not for a second should the ethnic background of the people who live in those areas be a factor.

I ask the parliamentary assistant today to take this back to the Premier and hopefully the Premier tomorrow will have the courage to stand up and do the right thing. And if he truly believes that Mr Barrett's comments were wrong, inappropriate, harmful, divisive and dangerous, then he'll do the right thing and fire Mr Barrett as a parliamentary assistant to the minister.

Mr Morley Kells (Etobicoke-Lakeshore): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'm here tonight on behalf of the Premier as his parliamentary assistant. To answer the member's concerns I would like to read back into the record the Premier's response from earlier today.

"I think the member's comments do not, by any interpretation, and certainly do not in any way reflect a view

that I or this government shares and I'm happy to clarify that and make it very clear.

"I want the member and I want the members of this Legislature and I want the public, and I want to be very clear about what we are doing in reforming local administration. We're doing so to cut down the size of government. We're doing so to reduce the number of politicians. We're doing so to find savings, by doing this, which will then be passed on to the taxpayers through property tax cuts or through improved services.

"I want to say this to you: Any suggestions to the contrary would be inaccurate, and any suggestion to any other motivation is false."

HOMES FOR THE AGED

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Pursuant to standing order 37, the member for Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington has given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given today by the Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter and the minister or parliamentary assistant may reply for up to five minutes.

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): My issue is of course with the Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation. At this time I would like to thank the minister. I believe that being here this evening required some change in her schedule, so I very much appreciate that she would accommodate and be here at this time.

On two specific occasions the minister has referred to me as a new member. I'm not sure the point that she's trying to make with that reference, but I would remind the minister that she's a rookie too. I think that maybe her inexperience in that particular role has resulted in her ability to directly answer the questions that have been posed to her.

She has had several direct questions come to her over the past two weeks with regard to the situations in retirement homes in the province. The responses to the questions have been literally all over the map. One of the responses offered the idea that there is an elder abuse task force. My office last week contacted several key provincial senior agencies and they had no idea about the round table, who was on it, what it was going to talk about other than issues relating to elder abuse. All of that is really very worthy and noble and important, and I certainly look forward to an announcement very soon from the minister's office about that particular initiative, but I'd like to make the point at this time that the elder abuse round table has nothing to do with the situation in retirement homes right now, today, and how this government is going to address the very immediate need in that particular area.

1820

The minister has also responded on more than one occasion in recent weeks about the responsibilities that municipalities have with regard to this issue. My office

had contacted the city of Toronto, and they've been told that there really isn't any assistance from the government to help them as they are struggling to deal with this issue. They have, to their credit, established a hotline for people in retirement homes who would find themselves in difficulty. My office has been able to find out that that hotline has received over 150 calls. Half of the calls have been from residents, the other half have been from family members, and 10% of the calls have been from outside of Toronto. We applaud the city of Toronto initiative, but what about the other municipalities that don't have a hotline? What about the people in retirement homes in other municipalities that don't have a number to call? Is the city of Toronto to bear the burden of all the situations across the province because at the present time they are the only municipality that has a hotline to deal with this?

Minister, the province is the only agency at this time that has the resources and the expertise to assure residents in retirement homes across the province of some reasonable level of care.

The minister in response has referred as well to self-regulation. Yesterday I met with the executive director of the Ontario Residential Care Association, who said to me that we need a provincial solution.

The minister has referred to reports from previous governments, and I have those reports. I have the 1989 report, Rest and Retirement, a report on the regulation of residential care facilities. I have the 1992 Dr Lightman report. I have the Regulation of Standards of Care in Rest Homes report issued by Anne Johnston in 1987. All three reports very clearly indicate that the province has a role in dealing with this important issue.

My question is, what is the government going to do today to address the very serious issue of safety of people in retirement homes in the 586 municipalities in the province?

Hon Helen Johns (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, minister responsible for seniors and women): It is indeed a pleasure to be able to speak one more time in the House about seniors and their safety. Of course it's paramount to me as the minister for seniors, and I care very deeply about this issue as a result of having parents who are seniors in the province of Ontario.

Let me just give you a little bit of background to tell you about seniors in the province. Let me tell you that 8% of the people who are seniors in the province live in retirement homes, 24% are in chronic care hospitals, nursing homes or homes for the aged, and the balance are at home, either alone, with relatives, or with some government help.

When the member opposite talks about the lack of commitment by the government with respect to seniors, let me say that as a result of the inaction of the previous two governments, this government made a commitment to put \$1.2 billion into long-term-care facilities. It was the largest investment that had ever been made in health care before. The reason for that was that we acknowledged the fact that there need to be 20,000 new long-

term-care beds in the province, and we're working to do that.

If they had been built in the 1970s, 1980s, 1990s, then we might not have the backlog that we have. We acknowledge that in the long-term-care area we need to build new beds. We've made a huge dollar commitment to the taxpayers of the province to do that.

A large number of our seniors are at home, and with respect to that the government has made a commitment to increase home care for these seniors. We put \$1.7 billion into home care in the province. What we want to do is ensure that people have the ability to stay in their homes as long as they'd like to.

I'm probably one of the fortunate people in this House whose parents still can stay at home and who live with me most of the year. I'd like to say that those home care services are important for seniors, and they're necessary.

We now are into talking about retirement homes, which is 8% of the population. We need to do more to make sure that our seniors are safe, so let me tell you what's happening in the province right now.

There is a combined need to work together with respect to retirement homes and I look forward to working with any municipality that has any issues with respect to it. The province has approved and passed a number of bills that protect our seniors in the province: We have the Tenant Protection Act; we have the Ontario building code and the Ontario fire code; we have the Regulated Health Professions Act. Each of these bills provides protection to seniors wherever they are in the province. For example, if a senior receives health care from a health care provider, there are regulations that ensure their safety, and the public health care they receive from these health care professionals is monitored, regulated and it can be checked.

We also have the Tenant Protection Act, which ensures that residents of retirement homes are protected when it comes to their accommodation.

Interjection.

Hon Mrs Johns: I know that you're new and you don't want to hear the answer, but I give you this opportunity to hear it.

We have the Ontario building code and the Ontario fire code, which ensure that buildings that are built to standards, so we have the opportunity to ensure that people are safe within their own jurisdictions.

Who has the ability to look at these and to regulate them? These are provincial laws; the municipalities can put bylaws through to regulate.

I'm mystified, because in the last three or four weeks the city of Toronto has done exactly that. They've set up a hotline; they've gone out and looked at, I think it was 12 homes last week; they looked at them through a number of different areas. Last week I quoted the public health official for the city of Toronto. He said he didn't need any new bylaws from me, he didn't need any new legislation; he could go out there right now and do that. And out they went.

Interjection.

Hon Mrs Johns: It's in the paper. I'll be happy to quote it again, but that's what was said.

I would like to say that I continue to work with the Ontario Residential Care Association; I continue to work through the seniors' secretariat to help any municipality that needs any help, because I'm deeply committed to the seniors of the province.

The Acting Speaker: There being no further matters to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to have carried.

This House stands adjourned until 1:30 pm tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1829.

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- 2003



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of Ontario**

First Session, 37th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 37^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 3 November 1999

Mercredi 3 novembre 1999

**Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr**

**Président
L'honorable Gary Carr**

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 3 November 1999

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 3 novembre 1999

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CANCER CARE

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): I want to address my remarks to the Minister of Health. During the recent Breast Cancer Awareness Day, the minister praised the screening advances made in our province and confirmed that indeed early detection saves lives.

A constituent of mine, Mrs Antonietta Quaglietta, has been on the waiting list to be seen by an oncologist for breast cancer treatment since September 21. She has been told of a waiting period of three to four months, and her doctor is increasingly concerned that his patient has to wait too long for critical radiation treatments. My constituent has already had major surgery twice, in June and July, and has now been presented with the option of going to either Thunder Bay or Buffalo. Five weeks of treatment away from her family business is not an encouraging option.

This clearly shows that women in the same condition as my constituent, detected with breast cancer, are left at the mercy of their fears and worries as the days slip by and turn into weeks and months waiting for treatment. I wonder if this is the way we treat women in Ontario. I ask the minister if this is what the government calls saving lives.

TAKE OUR KIDS TO WORK DAY

Mr David Young (Willowdale): I rise today to recognize national Take Our Kids to Work Day.

Take Our Kids to Work Day was established four years ago in the greater Toronto area by an organization known as the Learning Partnership. Grade 9 students from across the country are encouraged to spend a day at work with a parent, a relative, an adult friend or a volunteer host.

The Learning Partnership is a non-profit, volunteer-driven, professionally staffed organization that was established in 1993. The focus of the Learning Partnership is to develop positive and constructive relationships between education, business and the community.

Take Our Kids to Work Day has experienced phenomenal growth in the last four years. In fact, last year over

300,000 students and 75,000 workplaces took part in the program. This year we anticipate it will be far more successful.

There are three aims of the Take Our Kids to Work Day program: to offer students insight into the working world, to allow students to see their parents at work, and to encourage and emphasize that education goes beyond the classroom.

I can tell you from personal experience that this is a worthwhile program. My daughter Sara is with me here today, which makes this day and the program all the more special to me. I am certain that all participants in the program will be similarly proud and will agree that this is an excellent investment of our time in our children's future.

COURTROOM SECURITY

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): This government pays lip service to cracking down on crime, and yesterday they revealed their flagship policy on crime, a three-page act cracking down on squeegee kids. Some flagship. Some crackdown.

Yet this government cannot even control crime in the very heart of our justice system, the very place where we try criminals—the courtrooms of this province. Judges and police reported last week that breaking into a courtroom is as easy as looting a convertible with the top down. When the sun goes down, the Attorney General takes responsibility for security of our courtrooms, and that's exactly when thieves easily break into courtrooms and judges' offices, stealing highly confidential information about victims of crime.

Last Thursday, after a series of recent break-ins in the courthouses, Judge Derek Hogg, the chief administrative judge, threatened to shut down the courts in Etobicoke until something is done about the mess. If the courts are closed for business, then crime is left unchecked and victims continue to suffer. Judge Hogg has been put in an impossible position: close the courtrooms or leave the courtrooms open to thieves. The Premier's limo has better security than the courtrooms of Ontario.

Judge Hogg has said to this government: "They have been told a thousand times that something bad could happen.... Not just for us, but for the public as well. I don't know why they don't do something about it." I don't know why either, and I look forward to a response from the minister.

ONTARIO RENTAL HOUSING TRIBUNAL

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): The Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal has one mediator to handle landlord and tenant disputes across all of northern Ontario. In November, this mediator, who is located in Sudbury, will be rendered surplus. Northern tenancy issues will then be handled by mediators in eastern and southern Ontario, probably by video or teleconferencing. This arrangement discriminates against northern landlords and tenants because they don't have access to complete mediation services as do people in the east and south.

The problem stems right back to the creation of this tribunal by the Harris government. In the original plan for the organization, there was no mediator position in Sudbury for the north. It was only due to transitional money to get the tribunal operating and the fact that 45 rent officers were surplus that the northern Ontario regional office of the tribunal received a mediator in Sudbury for the short term. Now even this has gone. This situation is unacceptable.

The Harris government has an obligation and an opportunity to fix the mess. Right now, KPMG is completing an operational review of the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal for the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. I am convinced that KPMG will identify a need for mediators in northern Ontario, both the northeast and the northwest, so that landlords and tenants can access a specific individual personally for mediation services.

The minister must recognize that this service is needed and respond positively by ensuring that those in the north receive the services they need.

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr Frank Mazzilli (London-Fanshawe): I am proud to stand in the Legislature today to inform the House of a great success story in my riding of London-Fanshawe.

The London Community Small Business Centre was started in 1986 through the generous sponsorship of the city of London, the London Chamber of Commerce, the University of Western Ontario, Fanshawe College and the province of Ontario.

Attached to the small business centre is a program called the small business incubator. The business incubator is designed to meet the special needs of start-up companies, providing flexible space and a wide variety of services on a shared basis, all at an affordable cost to entrepreneurs. There are 24 companies currently housed in the incubator, mostly involved in manufacturing, and 43 companies have successfully passed through the incubation process and graduated into the community.

Later, the small business centre, in partnership with the city of London and the province of Ontario, established a resource centre. The centre has a reference library available to the public covering a wide range of topics for aspiring entrepreneurs and one-on-one counse-

ling with entrepreneurs in proposed ventures and business plan development.

This government realizes that governments do not create jobs, businesses create jobs. We have worked hard for the last four years to create an economic climate for new entrepreneurs to succeed. I'm proud to have members of my community supporting and encouraging these enterprises.

1340

ARTS AND CULTURAL FUNDING

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): Yesterday, this building was filled with the incredible sound of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra. They performed on the steps of the Legislature to raise the profile of the dire circumstances facing these world-class musicians. This concert was enjoyed by members of all three parties and members of the public.

Toronto's cultural industry, which includes music, theatre, film and art, is a major contributor to tourism, taxes and employment. Yet the government of Ontario gives less financial support to cultural institutions as a percentage of their overall budget than any other province in Canada.

Maintaining Toronto's and Ontario's reputation as Canada's cultural centre without a world-class symphony orchestra is simply not possible. This strike by musicians is not about higher wages but is an attempt to wake up the board and our governments to the potential loss of a 76-year-old icon.

All great governments support culture and the arts. It, along with heritage, is vital to the health of any society. Let us not lose this calibre of orchestra because of government complacency and indifference.

REMEMBRANCE DAY

Mr Bob Wood (London West): I am honoured to inform the House that the Silver Cross Mother who will be laying the wreath in Ottawa this Remembrance Day is a resident of London West, Mrs Loyola Helen Park. She is the mother of Corporal Michael William Simpson, a Canadian peacekeeper who was killed with eight other Canadians by anti-aircraft fire in the Mideast in 1974. This is the first time that a peacekeeper's mother has been so honoured.

Both Mrs Park and her late husband, William James Simpson, were veterans of World War II, Mr Simpson having been a D-Day veteran who served in France, Belgium and Holland. Both Mrs Park's mother-in-law, Ormenta May Simpson, and her maternal grandmother, Elizabeth Snell Tutty, were Silver Cross Mothers.

Corporal Simpson was born and grew up in Toronto, joined the Canadian Army in 1965 and was posted to the Mideast in 1974. He was posthumously awarded the UN service medal.

Mrs Park's family is an outstanding example of people who are prepared to come forward to serve their country

and humankind generally in order to create a better world for all. It is their kind of people who have made this country what it is and who are making the world what it should be.

Corporal Simpson's brother, Jack Simpson, is with us in the gallery today. I ask all members to join with me in recognizing him and his family.

GUELPH OVERPASS

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): Last week, the people of Ontario learned that they are out millions of dollars thanks to the Ministry of Transportation. The headline in the Guelph Mercury says it all: "Overpass Fiasco Costs \$3.2 Million."

Thanks to Tory cuts to MTO's planning and design department and the need now to contract out the work, the ministry made an expensive mistake in its initial plan for the overpass at Highways 6 and 7 in Guelph. Then the ministry entered into a bizarre dispute with its own contractor, which caused delays for months, costing Ontario taxpayers \$3.2 million, with nothing to show for it.

The Minister of Transportation should be ashamed of this blatant incompetence and scandalous mismanagement. This matter went to court and the judge in the case called the actions of his ministry "unconscionable." Here we have our roads and highways in a state of crisis, yet the Mike Harris government just wasted millions of dollars in a shockingly inappropriate dispute, which they lost, and then tried to hide the facts from the public, for it was only when they were forced to reveal the facts that the ministry acknowledged the true costs.

Today I think the minister should stand up and apologize to the people of Guelph and Ontario for the mismanagement, the delays, the extra costs and the blatant attempt to hide the real story from the public, because the public was not well served by this fiasco.

Make no mistake about it: If the ministry tries to handle their foul-ups as they did with the Guelph overpass fiasco, it can happen again, causing countless other delays and pointless disputes, all because of penny-wise but pound-foolish decisions. What a shame.

TAKE OUR KIDS TO WORK DAY

Mr Brad Clark (Stoney Creek): I rise today to speak on a similar topic already mentioned by my friend from Willowdale.

I wish to inform the House that this is National Career Week. To commemorate this week, the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board and the Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board have organized Take Our Kids to Work Day for grade 9 students.

All across Hamilton-Wentworth today, parents and guardians are taking their kids to the office, to the store, to the factory and even to the Legislature to allow the students to see them at work. Seven thousand students will join their parent or guardian at work today.

This day provides our kids with a view of the working world to help give them an understanding of its demands and opportunities. They are expected to tour the workplace, meet with the employees and other participants and gain a better appreciation of their parent or guardian and the work they do to support their family.

At this time, let me introduce my daughter Brienne, who joins us in the east visitors' gallery. I'm proud to report to the House that Brienne has already learned a lot during her first day at Queen's Park. In fact, she wants to actively pursue a change to the standing orders of the Clark household. She would like to have the same powers as you, Mr Speaker, so that every time I begin to lecture her at home, all she has to do is stand up and I have to sit down and shut up.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

PETERBOROUGH REGIONAL HEALTH CENTRE ACT, 1999

Mr Stewart moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr3, An Act respecting Peterborough Regional Health Centre.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Pursuant to standing order 86(a), this bill stands referred to the Commissioners of Estate Bills.

TOWNSHIP OF NORTH KAWARTHA ACT, 1999

Mr Stewart moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr8, An Act to change the name of The Corporation of the Township of Burleigh-Anstruther-Chandos to The Corporation of the Township of North Kawartha.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Pursuant to standing order 84(a), this bill stands referred to the standing committee on regulations and private bills.

HARBOURFRONT TRAILER PARK LTD. ACT, 1999

Mr Dunlop moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr1, An Act to revive Harbourfront Trailer Park Ltd.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Pursuant to standing order 84(a), this bill stands referred to the standing committee on regulations and private bills.

**STUDENT HEALTH AND SAFETY
PROGRAMS ACT, 1999**

**LOI DE 1999 SUR LES PROGRAMMES
DE SANTÉ ET DE SÉCURITÉ
POUR ÉTUDIANTS**

Mr Gravelle moved first reading of the following bill: Bill 10, An Act to bring health and safety programs to Ontario students / Projet de loi 10, Loi visant à offrir des programmes de santé et de sécurité aux étudiants de l'Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

A short explanation, member for Thunder Bay-Superior North.

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): As we all know, there are far too many accidents and fatalities in the workplace in the province. My private member's bill addresses this by forming a health and safety educational council made up of members from labour, business, injured workers, students and educators whose role will be to recommend programs in the classroom that will inform all Ontario students of workplace safety issues, hopefully leading to fewer tragedies once they do enter the workforce.

1350

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Government House Leader): I move that, notwithstanding standing order 96(d), the following changes be made to the ballot list for private members' public business: Mr Coburn and Mr DeFaria exchange places in order of precedence such that Mr Coburn assumes ballot item 45 and Mr DeFaria assumes ballot item 12; and Mr Conway and Mr Ruprecht exchange places in order of precedence such that Mr Conway assumes ballot item 4 and Mr Ruprecht assumes ballot item 6; and Mr Ramsay and Mr Gravelle exchange places in order of precedence such that Mr Ramsay assumes ballot item 48 and Mr Gravelle assumes ballot item 8; and Ms Di Cocco and Mr Phillips exchange places in order of precedence such that Ms Di Cocco assumes ballot item 68 and Mr Phillips assumes ballot item 9.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Mr Sterling has moved that, notwithstanding standing order 96(d), the following changes be made—dispense?

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Government House Leader): I seek

unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding the membership of certain standing committees.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The government House leader has requested unanimous consent. Agreed? Agreed.

Hon Mr Sterling: I move that the following amendments be made to the membership of certain committees: Mr Skarica and Mr O'Toole exchange places such that Mr Skarica is on the standing committee on finance and Mr O'Toole is on the standing committee on estimates; Mr Hastings and Mr Coburn exchange places such that Mr Hastings is on the standing committee on public accounts and Mr Coburn is on the standing committee on regulations and private bills.

The Speaker: Mr Sterling has moved that the following amendments be made to the membership of certain committees—dispense?

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

ACCESS TO LEGISLATIVE BUILDING

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: On Monday of this week a member of the third party stood in this House and asked that the Toronto Symphony Orchestra be allowed to play within the precincts of the Legislative Assembly building. Mr Speaker, I believe that you allowed this to happen, although there was an indication by the Toronto Symphony Orchestra that they wanted to undertake a demonstration and hand out pamphlets. That has normally taken place outside the building, and I guess that right has been granted to any group that wants to undertake that.

I understand that yesterday the orchestra was allowed to come into the building. However, they did undertake a demonstration while in the building, which is contrary to the rules we have agreed to in this place.

Mr Speaker, I would like to know what agreement you had from the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, and I would also like to know what your plans would be for allowing this to happen in the future. I believe that the rules which we had should be adhered to, and I was very sorry to see the Toronto Symphony Orchestra break these rules. But I would like to know what the agreement was between you and the orchestra.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): As the members know, it is my position that we should try to keep this House open and give as many opportunities for people to come in. As you know, we've had choirs come in here. There was some concern voiced over this particular.

It was my feeling that I give everybody the benefit of the doubt on the issue. We were very clear, in the forms that are signed by the members coming in here, that there was to be no demonstration. They were clearly aware of that. In light of the circumstances, I made sure it was reaffirmed with them that they were very clear that demonstrations—and that is not only demonstrations but

in situations like this when, as you know, choirs come in to play, it would not be acceptable for any of the choirs to hand out information and solicit commercial business and play.

We were very clear with the Toronto Symphony that they were not allowed to do any demonstrating. I did, however, say in the beginning it is my belief that we should try to keep this House as open, as accessible, as possible. They were very clearly made aware of the rules, and I understand they did not follow those rules. In the future I will have to take that into consideration when a request is made.

I thank the member for his point of order. That is the understanding.

I want to be clear to everybody that we cannot allow any demonstrations as they come in here. They are guests coming in, and we cannot and will not allow any demonstrations to take place. I think all members will be good in that regard, as will the vast majority of the groups that come in. That is the situation. I thank the member for raising that.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I was there throughout the whole proceeding. We did discuss this with you and you did indicate that there should be no political speeches. I passed that on, and there was no political speech made because of the direction you gave. I'm not sure what the government whip has indicated by way of demonstration. I didn't see any demonstration that he's talking about. They played, as we had agreed. There was no distribution of flyers that I was able to see, so I'm not quite sure what, if any, reference was made in that regard. With respect to any demonstration, I didn't see any, so I'd like some clarification from the government whip about what demonstration he's speaking about.

The Speaker: The member will know, as I understand it—and I wasn't there, so I didn't see it—that there was during the performance something written on their shirts, before they played. I didn't see what it actually said.

All I'm saying to all of the members is that I will try to be as accommodating as we can for any group that comes in. As you know, the Toronto Symphony is a world-renowned group. As I said to all members, we will try to work through this but we have to be very clear that any group coming in here cannot participate in a demonstration. That's the situation, as I understand it. I thank all the members for raising their concerns.

MEMBERS' PRIVILEGES

Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain): Mr Speaker, I stand today on a point of personal privilege regarding comments made yesterday by the Minister of Education to the member for Parkdale-High Park. I found that the honourable member imputed false motives to members on this side of the House when she said, "I really hope that the Hamilton board doesn't take their political advice from the member opposite, because it's not going to be of assistance to them as they meet with

ministry officials to sort out what they are doing with the increased special education funding they've received from the ministry."

We were elected to represent our constituents, and when my constituents called to let me know that their disabled children were still at home because of lack of resources, I recommended that they approach their trustees. The trustees, in turn, called my office for advice. My advice was then to go to the ministry. When those attempts failed and the board called me back, I then, and only then, recommended that they approach the Liberal critic for education.

I understand that this is part of my responsibilities and felt that yesterday the minister was imputing false motive, that somehow the members on this side of the House were in some sort of unethical collusion with the Hamilton board. That is not the case. As well, I felt her comments were a direct threat to the board and to the parents of these children.

A strong democracy demands a strong opposition. The board is well within its rights to consult with its area MPPs. In fact, they consulted with all of the area MPPs. I, unlike the minister, respect that. I was doing my job in representing my constituents and the Liberal critic for education was doing his job for raising the issue. The minister's comments were far beneath her position. I ask that the honourable minister withdraw her accusations and guarantee that the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board's funding request be given professional and objective attention.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): Mr Speaker, the same as my colleague, I submitted notice to you that I intended to raise this same point of personal privilege in regard to the comments made by the Minister of Education.

Under section 23 of the standing orders, I believe that the minister, Mr Speaker, and I ask you to rule on this, attempted to intimidate the school board with her comments and clearly attempted to intimidate the opposition. Speaker, if you read—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. I cannot hear the member's point of order.

1400

Mr Agostino: The minister says, "I really hope that the Hamilton board doesn't take their political advice from the member opposite, because it's not going to be of any assistance to them as they meet with ministry officials." Clearly, a board could read into that that the minister suggests that if they dare speak to the opposition about an issue as important as special needs and children without schools, that may hurt them in their chance to get further assistance. This is clearly intimidation of the House, intimidation of the board, totally improper with the rules of this House, and I ask you to rule on that and rule that the minister has erred in that. She should at least withdraw the comment and apologize both to the school board and to the opposition for clearly a bullying, intimidating tactic to get people to shut up on an important issue such as kids who have special needs, who can't go

to school because this government can't fund them properly.

The Speaker: The member for Parkdale-High Park on the same point of order.

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): I want to add my objection to the loss of privileges to myself as an individual member of this House and to the House as a whole by the remarks made by the Minister of Education in this House yesterday.

The minister implied directly in her comments that public bodies such as school boards would not do well by dealing with individual members such as myself, acting in the capacity of adding to the well-being of this government. It shows a misreading of this House, of its precedents and of parliamentary democracy to use this House as a platform to make a public pronouncement that the opposition is not a worthy part of the formulation of policy and better government in this province.

It does reflect on a political basis a certain outlook, a certain attitude that we've come to associate with the government, but importantly, it cannot be allowed to stand as a pronouncement of this House by a minister of the crown taking away from the privileges that I'm supposed to be able to exercise on behalf of the residents of Parkdale-High Park and, by inference, the province as a whole as the critic for the loyal opposition for education.

Mr Speaker, I would ask for your consideration of this point for the privileges of myself, the other members who have raised a similar point and for the House as a whole.

The Speaker: The member for Hamilton West on the same point of privilege.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): On the same point of privilege, Mr Speaker: I just want to point out the importance of this given the fact that the trustees in Hamilton have bent over backwards trying to follow all the procedures, follow all of the process the government has offered up in terms of responding to questions the ministry has to resolve the issue. The issue, of course, as my colleague from Hamilton Mountain has mentioned, is about kids, kids who have special needs who were not in school.

The trustees were feeling the pressure from our constituents, and rightly so. Any suggestion that our trustees ought not talk to MPPs who aren't from the government, in effect, takes this whole issue and puts it under a cloud of secrecy, to be judged and juried by government members only, and that is an affront to our democratic way.

So I offer to the Liberal official opposition our support, certainly my support as an NDP member in the Hamilton area, for the point they are raising and overall for the treatment of our board by this government, by the minister. Speaker, I would just ask you to recall the way the minister conducted herself while these points were being raised, laughing and joking once again that none of these things are important. They are important, Speaker. We need you now here to reaffirm our legitimate role in the democratic process.

The Speaker: I thank the members for their notice. However, in the notice of a point of privilege, it also should indicate what the point of privilege is and it did not. In the future, if you could do that, I know all the members referred to standing order 23(i), the standing order regarding if a member imputes false motives to another member.

First of all, it would not have been a point of privilege; it would have been a point of order. It should have been raised at that particular time. It is not a point of order.

I will say this: There has been some escalation. I will be listening very carefully to all members on all sides so that we don't have circumstances like this again. But it is not a point of order.

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Solicitor General): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: On Monday, November 1, the member from Niagara Centre made a response to the Minister of Correctional Services during his statement on Crime Prevention Week. In that response, I believe it was implied that my absence from the House that day—and also imputed motives as well as to why we were not making that statement.

I believe nothing could be further from the truth than that. Certainly, we all support Crime Prevention Week as a vehicle to make sure that the citizens of understand the importance—I was in Bancroft that day. I was at the funeral of police cadet Allan Christiansen, who was tragically killed on his way back from his graduating exercise at the Ontario Police College. This is a great tragedy because this young man had decided to dedicate his life to protecting his community. I would like to convey our condolences from the members of this House to Allan's family and friends, and also to the Police Chief McAlpine and the members of the Durham police. I believe it's appropriate to ask the member to withdraw that imputing of motivation.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): It's remarkable that these statements couldn't have been deferred to later in the week.

I am indeed pleased that the Solicitor General was at this young man's funeral. I wish he could have seen fit to attend the funeral of the murdered police officer as a result of a criminal motor vehicle accident in Niagara some few weeks ago. I withdraw anything that was uncomplimentary or inappropriate.

The Speaker: I thank the member. As all members will also know, they should not be speaking about members' attendance in this House. I thank the members for raising the point of order.

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): Mr Speaker, I rise on a point of privilege today under standing order number 21. I should point out that pursuant to standing order 21(c), I submitted this point of privilege to your office prior to 12:30 today.

At approximately 6:15 last night during the adjournment debate, the member for Hamilton East, Mr Dominic Agostino, attributed a movement on my part to acknowledge agreement or disagreement. I do not feel that the member should have presumed my support for his com-

ments or a condemnation thereof. I would like to put that on the record.

The point comes up because of the peculiar rules of the adjournment debate, or what is sometimes referred to as the late show. Those peculiar rules state in part that no question of privilege or points of order may be raised during the time provided for the late show.

I'd like to first of all say that the Acting Speaker from Algoma-Manitoulin made the correct ruling. I'd also like to say, secondly, that it is not my position that the member for Hamilton East deliberately exploited the peculiar rule.

My points are: My body language was interpreted perhaps falsely, my nod described as "shaking," with no comment as to whether it was assent or dissent. The member for Hamilton East presumes I agreed with the member, without indicating which member. Could it be that he indeed meant the member for Hamilton East, himself? Could it be the member for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant? Or could it have been the member from York North?

The member for Hamilton East goes on, "Maybe that's the first member" etc and concludes, "Mr Johnson does." I'd like to point out that there are two Mr Barretts referred to in his story and I don't think my body language called for any such conclusion.

The remedy that I'm asking is that the member for Hamilton East consent to deleting the last three sentences in that paragraph on page 316 of the official records of this House.

The Speaker: I thank the member for the point of order and for the point of privilege and for giving me notice. He correctly alluded to it being during the adjournment debate. Nevertheless, I think the member for Perth-Middlesex will know that the member may not correct the record of another member. If any member does want to correct the record, he or she may do that, but is not a point of personal privilege.

1410

VISITOR

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: On a lighter note, I would like to indicate to members of the House that the former member for St Catharines-Brock, Tom Froese, is in the government members' gallery.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): That's not a point of order, and in fact that was my next task. We'll refrain from doing it again, but I thank the member for that.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

WASTE REDUCTION WEEK

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of the Environment, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I would

like to invite all members to join me in proclaiming this week, November 1 to 7, as Ontario's 15th annual Waste Reduction Week. I would say parenthetically, I think it was when the member for St Catharines was minister that this week was first proclaimed.

This event, coordinated by the Recycling Council of Ontario, raises awareness on the 3Rs—reduce, reuse and recycle—and encourages all people to reduce waste.

This year's theme is: "Make your R2K resolution. Step lightly into 2000." Our government is leading the challenge with a long-term plan to sustain our waste diversion programs, including the blue box. We will achieve our target, to cut in half the amount of waste sent for disposal.

This morning I joined the RCO at an industry breakfast to share some exciting news: An agreement has been reached by industry, municipalities and the provincial government to help fund municipal blue box and other waste diversion initiatives. I was pleased to sign a memorandum of understanding with our industry and municipal partners, including the Liquor Control Board of Ontario and the Recycling Council of Ontario, to launch Ontario's new Waste Diversion Organization. The organization will begin its work immediately.

The Waste Diversion Organization is based on a one-year voluntary memorandum of understanding. WDO members have committed \$14.5 million to develop, implement and fund municipal waste diversion programs. We asked for and received voluntary participation from a wide range of partners. Industry's resources and expertise, along with those of the municipalities, will help improve existing programs and find more effective ways to reduce and divert waste.

Specifically, the Waste Diversion Organization will establish programs to fund municipal blue box costs related to wine and liquor glass containers to the extent of \$8 million; increase diversion of organic wastes with an investment of as much as \$2 million; establish additional depots for municipal special household wastes—which are sometimes referred to as household hazardous wastes—involving as much as \$1 million; improve the efficiency and effectiveness of blue box programs with funding of as much as \$2 million; and support municipalities in informing the public about waste management activities with \$1 million in free advertising in daily newspapers.

The Waste Diversion Organization's industry partners are drawn from the following sectors: food and consumer products, daily newspapers, paint and coatings and chemical specialties. Other members represent the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, the Liquor Control Board of Ontario, the Recycling Council of Ontario and the Ministry of the Environment. Our ministry's role will be primarily advisory.

I believe that we are laying a solid foundation for waste reduction in Ontario for years to come. I am personally committed to working with the Waste Diversion Organization to ensure that it continues to work well beyond the one-year initiative.

This, for me, is my second high point in Waste Reduction Week. On Monday, with my colleague the Minister of Education, I had the pleasure of joining RCO members and about 250 young people at the Ontario Science Centre to launch the week itself and a new Ontario eco-schools waste reduction recognition program. I hope all honourable members will join me in supporting Waste Reduction Week and participate in the events in their constituencies. Let us all offer our congratulations and appreciation to the RCO and to the hundreds of volunteers working to make Waste Reduction Week a success.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Responses.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I want to join, first of all, in congratulating the Recycling Council of Ontario for the very important role it has played over the years in encouraging waste diversion. We were in circumstances many years ago in many jurisdictions where virtually everything was dumped in what we call a garbage dump or thrown into an incinerator and burned, to a point where we, in the 1980s and 1990s, have looked at and implemented a number of policies to divert a lot of that waste.

The minister will know that I will restrain myself in my applause, knowing that the government members are in fact there to applaud ministers and policies of the government. I will simply say to him—because I want to help him out, as he knows; that's my goal in this House, to help him out—that what is happening here is that the government is attempting to find money to replace the money the government has diverted from municipalities for the support of blue box recycling. You'll remember that municipalities used to get a large quantity of money from the provincial government to assist in meeting those obligations. Now what has happened, because this is waste diversion week, is that the government has diverted something, but it's not waste; it has diverted money.

As you would know, the government collects 10 cents per container at the LCBO and the Beer Store but has snatched this from the municipal recycling program. That's about \$35 million a year that the government has taken away from that program. I want to help the minister get that money back in his ministry, because I know the parsimonious Chair of Management Board, his perhaps rival someday, is a person who may be looking at getting that money for general government revenues. So I want to help the minister get that money back that his government has diverted away from those assistance programs for municipalities.

The minister is here today with his broom. His broom is to sweep the mess created by his Conservative predecessors in terms of waste diversion. I want to tell him that I wish him well in cleaning up that particular mess. I wish him well in securing the necessary funding for the program. I also wish him well in going beyond the voluntary aspect of this. You see, I applaud the people who voluntarily take part in these programs. I think they deserve a lot of credit. But there are a number of people out there who don't volunteer and should be brought into

the grand coalition assisting with this. I know it will be the minister's goal to have those people make their contribution, to have stewardship over the waste they create.

I also want to say that I think there is always a need for continuing education and opportunity in the field of hazardous waste; for municipal hazardous waste to be collected by municipalities, to allow people to be able to find places other than the drain or the garbage in which to place those hazardous wastes.

One of the problems the municipalities have, of course, is that the government of Mike Harris has downloaded so many additional responsibilities, which present a huge financial obligation in those municipalities, that they have a hard time continuing to operate their waste diversion efforts within those municipalities. For instance, in regional Niagara I know that the regional government now is responsible for \$18 million more, responsibility passed down from the provincial government. It was not a revenue-neutral exercise.

I had hoped that perhaps when the minister rose in the House today he might be giving us an assurance that he was going to now accept and implement the recommendations from the environment groups and conservation groups concerned about the Oak Ridges moraine. If he would like further time, I would be happy to ask for the unanimous consent of the House at the conclusion of my remarks to give the minister a further opportunity to say that he's going to implement the fine recommendations of the conservation groups in the Oak Ridges moraine. I think he would probably want to do that; if he does, I'll be happy to accommodate him in that regard.

I also wish the minister well in getting back some of the staff and investment in the Ministry of the Environment that he has lost. The member for Hamilton East, the former Liberal critic, tells me that about 40% of the staff has been eliminated in the ministry—some of that is going to be in the waste division—and about 45% of the budget has disappeared from your ministry.

We on this side want to help out the minister. We're here to try to assist him in securing those items for his ministry, and I certainly hope he is successful in that effort. I can assure you that he will have our support.

1420

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): We're indeed in a charitable mood today, because I too want to help the Minister of the Environment. First of all I want to help him make clear what his announcement is really all about. Since his government has essentially abandoned recycling, he has to go out and cobble together one-year funding, otherwise the recycling programs we have in this province will begin to fall apart. What he is really announcing here today is that he managed to go out and cobble together funding to cover one year. It will not be completely adequate to the task, it will not provide all the funding that is necessary, but he has, as a stop-gap measure to cover up the chaos and destruction his government has created, managed to cobble together one year's funding. I hope he's able to do

much more than that, otherwise the sins of his government, in terms of neglecting this aspect of the environment, will be all too clear to everyone across the province.

I also want to help the minister with some other things. I was hoping that the minister was going to get on his feet today and apologize for writing a letter to the Uxbridge municipal council, essentially trying to tell Uxbridge and Durham region that they should abandon their concern about the Oak Ridges moraine, that they should side with the minister's developer friends and that they should ignore the environmental assessment that was done in 1996 and in 1997. I was hoping he was going to get to his feet and apologize for that completely inappropriate letter, for that completely inappropriate conduct.

I was also hoping that he was going to get to his feet today and announce that he had seen the light, that the government had seen the light, and was going to impose a development freeze on the Oak Ridges moraine. We were disappointed, but I want the minister to know that we're going to continue to help him along in that direction, because he knows, and I suspect many other members of the government know, that's what they should do.

Finally, I was hoping the minister would get on his feet today and announce that the government is going to hold a commission of inquiry into the relationship between the private interests of developers on the Oak Ridges moraine and his government's handling of land-use planning and environmental protection, or lack of environmental protection, on the Oak Ridges moraine. That too needs to be done, and we're going to do all we can in the Legislature to help the minister get to that position.

Again, we want to say that we'll do all we can to help the minister, but he's got an awful long way to go from the announcement he made here today.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Broadview-Greenwood): I too want to congratulate the Recycling Council of Ontario and all those who have been involved for many years in Waste Reduction Week and the ongoing tons and mountains of volunteers out there, as big as our mountains of garbage, trying to improve our 3-R system in Ontario.

I do want to say to the minister that he has in the past cut funding to municipalities for recycling, and the minister knows that. This is a stop-gap measure; it isn't going to resolve the problem.

The other thing I was hoping the minister would speak about today was that he would give us his opinion on the proposal that's been brought to Toronto city council today to move towards a wet-dry system, which I believe has been very successful in Guelph. In fact it saves millions of dollars, creates more jobs and is easier for people to do. I would like to know his position on that.

The other issue is incineration. As you know, when we were in government we banned incineration as an option for garbage disposal. Your government brought it back.

We now have controversy in some communities where a referendum showed that the majority of people do not want incineration as an option, yet the government and municipalities continue to allow that option at a time when we need to be improving the three Rs, not bringing in more pollution. Even with the latest, state-of-the-art technology, burning garbage creates air pollution. As everybody knows, we have a bad air pollution problem in Ontario.

I hope as well that the minister will take a look at that policy and reverse it once again.

ORAL QUESTIONS

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): My question is to the Minister of the Environment and Municipal Affairs. Earlier this month, your colleague Mr Gilchrist resigned from cabinet as a result of a police investigation into allegations that government policy was for sale for the price of \$25,000. You, sir, wrote a letter clearly attempting to influence a decision of the Ontario Municipal Board on behalf of developers with clear financial ties to your party. In fact, Jay-M Holdings contributed over \$15,000 to your party.

Minister, you're aware that a number of other developers have a great interest in the Oak Ridges moraine and they too have a great potential to gain from your involvement. To what extent was your interference prompted by financial contributions to your party and to what extent are you prepared to stand up today and put a freeze on the Oak Ridges moraine to ensure that proper development takes place over time?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of the Environment, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I thank the honourable member for the question and would say to him, as I said in this House last week as well, that the letter he makes reference to was not a letter to the OMB; it was not a letter to any member of the OMB. It was a letter to the regional chair. It did not take a position on the issue before the OMB. It took a position defending a piece of legislation over which I have carriage. It was advising him of the letter of the law and in no way was it an attempt to in any way influence a quasi-judicial tribunal. It was not even written about an issue that the tribunal had carriage of. So I disagree with his characterization.

In terms of who gave what to whom, I know that all political parties receive donations from individuals. I'm aware that our party has been the most successful at that because we have the best record for the people of Ontario, but it had no impact on my decision to write a letter or not to write a letter.

Mr Duncan: According to a report prepared by noted York University professor Robert MacDermid, 28 companies with links to the Cortellucci and Monte-

marano Development Group made 209 contributions to your party, totalling \$335,000, between 1995 and 1997. That same group of companies made no contributions to this political party.

One of those companies, is Fernbrook Homes Ltd. Let me read to you an ad about Fernbrook Homes, and I quote this from their ad which is readily available on the Internet: "Now previewing, a private, gated community overlooking ... the Oak Ridges moraine."

Can you confirm that this is the same Fernbrook Homes Ltd which is tied to the Cortellucci and Montemarano group of companies who made 209 contributions to your party totalling \$335,000?

Hon Mr Clement: The honourable member knows more about the contribution records of individuals or companies in Ontario than I do. Certainly it had no impact on my decision, because this is the first I've ever heard of it.

Mr Duncan: Let's talk about the principles then, Minister, because principles seem to be lacking over there. A developer has an interest in the moraine. It gives more than \$335,000 to the Tories, and guess what happens. The Minister of the Environment goes to bat for greater development in the moraine, as evidenced by his letter with respect to the Jay-M development. That's the bottom line, isn't it, Minister? They helped you, now we help them. This is not only an issue of your letter; this is a matter of public policy being for sale. Moreover, it's a matter of the public interest being for sale.

Minister, isn't that what's going on here? Aren't you prepared to sell out the public interest for your friends in the development industry?

1430

Hon Mr Clement: I guess the answer to the question is no. That is a complete mischaracterization of the intention of this government, which is to protect the public interest. That is what we were elected to do; that is our carriage day in and day out. I can only say to the honourable member that the accusations he is enunciating are news to me. Our goal is to ensure that public policy is maintained on the moraine or anywhere in Ontario.

I would say that our record is that we have prosperity in Ontario. We have had jobs and opportunity in Ontario for the first time, over the last five years, compared to 10 years previous to that. It's because we have this prosperity that we have development going on, but we always have to balance that with environmental interests and the interests of the public. But the fact is, that kind of balancing never occurred before we got elected simply because the economy stopped before we got elected and we were the ones who had to restart it. Those are the challenges we face as a government and we are up to that challenge.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): New question.

Mr Duncan: My second question is also to the Minister of the Environment. Let's agree that certain people are prospering under this government, there's no question.

Let's review the facts, Minister: Mr Gilchrist has resigned from cabinet. The police are investigating allegations from developers who say they were told that if they wanted the government's help, they had to cough up at least \$25,000. You wrote a letter clearly attempting to influence a decision of the Ontario Municipal Board on behalf of developers with clear financial ties to your party. Your party has received hundreds of thousands of dollars from the Cortellucci and Montemarano group of companies, who it appears have an interest in the moraine.

The message is clear: Your friends are the people who give you money and you reward your friends. Isn't that the way you're doing business, and wouldn't you agree that's not a proper way of doing business in Ontario?

Hon Mr Clement: In answer to his questions, no and yes.

Again I want to correct the honourable member's message and say that my letter was not to the OMB, it was not on an issue that's before the OMB. I wish to correct the record on that point.

If the honourable member has evidence that there is something untoward that has happened, evidence that he wishes to share, I encourage him to share it inside this House and I encourage him to make the allegations outside the House, since he is making allegations against individuals whose character he is impugning. If he feels so strongly about it, perhaps, if he is not protected by parliamentary immunity, he can make those allegations outside this House.

Mr Duncan: Professor MacDermid found that companies linked to this same group donated over \$335,000 between 1995 and 1997. We have uncovered an additional \$43,000 worth of contributions in 1998. While no one knows yet how many tens of thousands of dollars were given during the election, we do know this: The Premier is going back for more. Tonight, this very evening, Premier Harris is attending another fundraiser. This one is for \$400 a plate. Guess who's hosting it. None other than Cortellucci and Montemarano.

Minister, in addition to the hosts of tonight's gala fundraiser, how many other developers with an interest in the moraine will be attending with the Premier this evening?

Hon Mr Clement: To the best of my knowledge, the event this evening is sponsored by the PC Ontario fund, so I wish to correct the record there.

There is no evidence he has presented before me that draws a connection between his allegation and anything that is untoward in terms of public policy. I would say to the honourable member that clearly he deems it to be a necessity that his leader surprise a leadership challenge later on this month, and we all know what necessity is the mother of.

Mr Duncan: A pattern is emerging here, and even though the minister is not able to and the members opposite are, we can certainly connect the dots. This government rewards its friends, and its friends are the people who give the Conservative Party thousands—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Stop the clock. Order. Start the clock.

Mr Duncan: I would call it a web, a web of arrogance, a web of corruption.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Take your seat. Stop the clock. Start the clock.

Mr Duncan: This government rewards its friends, and its friends are the people who give to the Conservative Party. It appears as though this group of companies are advertising and looking into further development in the moraine. We know they've given \$378,000 to the Tory party. In addition to influence, we also find appointments. There's more: In the summer of 1998, Mario Cortellucci was appointed by this government to the York Region Police Services Board. Isn't that the way it works, Minister? If you pay, you'll have a say, whether it's on the development of environmentally sensitive land or the provision of police services. Will you agree today to freeze development on the Oak Ridges moraine?

Hon Mr Clement: Again, there is a whole bunch of allegations there. If he wants to follow it up with some hard evidence, that will be helpful to this House, because all there is before us is a lot of sound and fury. It signifies nothing. We have allegation heaped upon allegation. If he feels so strongly about it, say it outside the House.

With respect to the moraine, I would only say that this government is looking at a whole host of possibilities. To have a freeze without a policy in place I don't think is the right way to go. I think our obligation is to come up with a coherent policy. We inherited no policy from the previous two governments on this issue. We are developing a policy, and we will come up with a policy that not only ensures prosperity in Ontario but ensures the balance of that prosperity with ecological soundness as well. That is the challenge we face. They never had to face that because there was no economic growth at the end of their term.

ONTARIO DISABILITY SUPPORT PROGRAM

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Minister, we thought it impossible for your government to create more chaos than you created at the Family Responsibility Office, but in fact that's exactly what you're doing at the disability support office.

My specific question is about the sad state of affairs at the disability adjudication unit. As you know, someone who is disabled, after they've jumped through all the other hoops you've created, has to apply to the disability adjudication unit. They get sent an application package. They fill that out, they send it in. If they're lucky, they get a letter from you telling them that in four to six weeks at the earliest, perhaps six to eight weeks, it will be adjudicated. But when we follow up on applications, we're being told by the disability adjudication unit that

they're just now working on July's applications—a four- or five-month delay.

Minister, why are you telling disabled people something that isn't true?

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs): Meeting the needs of people with disabilities is an important priority for this government. That's why we've set up the Ontario disability support plan. With more than 200,000 people on ODSP across the province, we're working our very best to try to improve services, provide a whole range of employment supports to try to get rid of the label of "permanently unemployable" and to provide the supports for people in their communities.

When I was first elected as a member of provincial Parliament in this place, people had to wait up to two years for adjudication. Those of us on this side of the House thought that was unacceptable and we set out to change that. Our goal is to have cases adjudicated within six to eight weeks, and I'm pleased to say that we've got that caseload down to an average of eight weeks. We've made some solid progress. Can we do a better job? You bet. We continue to work on customer service.

1440

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Supplementary.

Mr Christopherson: Minister, you ought to be very concerned, because if you check the Hansards, you're going to find that your answer sounded an awful lot like the former Attorney General when he was dealing with FSP. We know what a boondoggle that was.

My office is swamped with cases. Jim Knox can only stand for about 10 minutes at a time—

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I think I heard the leader of the opposition say that the Minister of Community and Social Services had said something that wasn't true. I would ask the honourable member to please withdraw that comment. I don't think it is an accurate reflection of the facts.

The Speaker: I was listening carefully. I did not hear that, but if the member of the third party wants to withdraw it, he may. I did not hear that, but I will be listening. I caution all members, I'm going to be listening very carefully to what is said. I will sometimes occasionally miss things, but I'm going to listen very carefully.

Member for Hamilton West.

Mr Christopherson: As I was saying, Jim Knox can only stand for about 10 minutes at a time. He can't get physiotherapy because he just hasn't got the money to pay for it. He sent his application in May. In August, he had heard nothing from the ODSP. They told our staff it would take a few weeks. They told us the same thing in September. In October, they told us it would take another two to three weeks.

William MacDonald was diagnosed with a degenerative disc disease. He applied in May 1998; never heard a thing. We contacted the ODSP in July and were told they couldn't find his application. He couriered them another

application. Is a year and a half a reasonable waiting time?

Another constituent has schizophrenia. He sent in his application in February 1998. He couldn't get answers to his questions. He was told it was never received.

Minister, how long are disabled persons in this province expected to wait for entitlements that you have already acknowledged they're entitled to?

Hon Mr Baird: We're setting about to try to improve the system for disabled people in the province. The Ontario disability support plan has been an important part of that process. I think the transformation from the old way with which we did things to the new way has been a good one.

Can we do a better job than up to two years to adjudicate decisions to people with disabilities? You bet. That's why our adjudication process will be ensuring that, on average, we can adjudicate claims within six to eight weeks. That is significantly better than two years.

We continue to work with people with disabilities to try to improve the system so that we can do the best job we can for people with disabilities in Ontario.

The Speaker: Final supplementary.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Broadview-Greenwood): Minister, you don't know what you're talking about. We are dealing with cases from July. Stop the platitudes and listen to the problem.

Your government promised these people they would have an answer within eight weeks. We've had cases where applications sat unopened at the adjudication unit because staff and the local ODSP and Ontario Works office were never told to refer pending files to Toronto. We have cases where people go without medication for months because of adjudication unit delays. The fact is that disabled people are slipping through the cracks because of your mismanagement of the transition to ODSP. There aren't enough staff and the system just isn't in place to do what it's supposed to do. As a result, files are misplaced and applications are lost.

Minster, you made a promise to disabled people, which we supported in good faith. You've let those people down. You've broken that promise. When will you show some leadership and clean up this mess?

Hon Mr Baird: I don't believe it will come as any surprise to the member opposite that I don't fully share her characterization of this process.

We are trying to ensure that we can adjudicate claims for those who are applying for the Ontario disability support plan in an expeditious fashion. It used to take more than two years and I thought that was unacceptable. I believe we can do better. That's why we've put a system in place to try to better make these adjudications to ensure that people can get a timely response.

While that adjudication process goes on, people with disabilities can receive emergency assistance through Ontario Works in that interim period.

I know we can do better than the up to two years when the members opposite were in government. We continue to work to try to improve the system. As of the end of

October we got the average case time down from up to two years to eight weeks. That's a tremendous improvement and we're going to continue to work hard to make it even better.

SPORTS FACILITY TAXATION

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My next question is for the Minister of Finance. It's pretty clear that your government doesn't have time for the disabled. I now want to ask why you have so much time for NHL millionaires. Your decision to provide tax breaks for NHL millionaires enjoys no support across this province. The Liberal leader and the Liberal caucus may support it, but it is not an acceptable issue anywhere else in Ontario.

You don't have money for schools; you're closing schools. You don't have money to support disabled people and ensure that they can get by in life. You don't have money for daycare spaces. You don't have money for a northern health travel grant system. You don't have money for supportive housing. Yet you've got money for NHL millionaires.

Minister, I want to put a proposition to you. If you think that your decision is supported, then let's go out there and hold public hearings across the province and let us see how much support there is—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. Minister of Finance.

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): First of all, the leader of the third party obviously doesn't understand what the announcement last Thursday was about. The announcement was all about allowing individual municipalities to choose—

Ms Marilyn Churley (Broadview-Greenwood): It's one taxpayer, Ernie.

Hon Mr Eves: Just a minute—to choose whether or not they want to charge a full commercial rate on sporting facilities owned by private enterprise that are competing with municipally owned sporting facilities that pay no taxes. That's the first point that the leader doesn't seem to understand. I don't know what he has against municipal decision-making and autonomy, but it's entirely up to them to decide what's best for their community and their facilities in their community.

Second, he's assuming that whatever option the municipality chooses, if they choose one, they're not going to get the money back from other commercial and industrial taxpayers in those classes. They can. That's their decision.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Supplementary.

Mr Hampton: The minister's problem is that we understand all too well. This means a tax break for millionaire NHL operators at the municipal level, and then you're going to match it through the education portion at the provincial level. What this means is that your government doesn't have money to support disabled people, you don't have money for affordable housing,

you don't have money to protect the environment but, by God, when a couple of NHL millionaires come to the table, you have no problem at all, the money's right there.

Minister, I put to you this simple request: If you think the people of Ontario believe this is a good idea, then let's hold public hearings across the province. You can go and say to people why you believe it's a good idea. The Liberals tell people why they think it's a good idea. We're going to be there asking why there isn't money for health care, why there isn't money for education, why there isn't money for the disabled but there's money for NHL millionaires.

Will you hold those public hearings and give the people of Ontario a say?

1450

Hon Mr Eves: The leader of the third party might want to ask himself why he and his party supported tax-free status for the interim casino in Windsor, Ontario: So 90% of their clientele could come from Detroit and gamble tax-free. That was your idea of a subsidy. That was your idea about supporting people in different endeavours; they're not even Ontarians to start with.

It is entirely up to a local municipality whether they want to put their sport franchises and facilities on a level playing field with those that they're competing with elsewhere within Ontario, within Canada or within North America. If the leader of the third party has something against municipal autonomy, doesn't think that Toronto is big enough or intelligent enough or informed enough to make that decision, or Ottawa isn't, all they have to do is stand up and say so.

ONTARIO REALTY CORP

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): My question is to the Chair of Management Board. We are now on the eve of another scandal linked to your government. This involves the Ontario Realty Corp, involves a high-profile Tory fundraiser, Mr Jeffery Lyons, and the CEO of the Ontario Realty Corp, Mr Tony Miele.

We know that Mr Miele is a long-time supporter of yours and appointed by you to the Ontario Realty Corp. It involves the sale of the property the government owns at Jarvis and Wellesley.

John Berman, the president of Cityscape Development, has said in court documents and made clear allegations of bid-rigging against the Ontario Realty Corp, Mr Miele and Mr Lyons. He says, and I quote, that the overturning of this deal "reflects political corruption on the absolute highest level." Mr Lyons, your friend, your fundraiser, alleges in court documents as well that he agrees that there is corruption, only that it involves employees of the Ontario Realty Corp, not Mr Miele. These are very serious allegations, not made by the opposition, not made by the media, but made by two key proponents.

In view of all this, will you today call for a police investigation of the Ontario Realty Corp and its dealings with Keg property at Jarvis and Wellesley?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I think the member of the opposition is aware that this matter is before the courts and he's also aware that I can't talk about the specifics. I can tell you one thing, though: There was no agreement of purchase and sale. Some of the allegations you are making are totally false.

In terms of Jeff Lyons, I think all members of this House and most of the public realize that people of all political stripes get involved in the political process. Some volunteer to do door-knocking, others put up signs, others donate money. So the question isn't whether Jeff Lyons contributed to my riding or to the PC Party. The question is, did he get preferential treatment because of his involvement in the process with my office? The answer to that is no. That has been pointed out in newspaper articles and that has been pointed out in the research you've done as well. I'm sure you're aware of that.

Mr Agostino: I'm sure the minister is aware that what is before the courts is a civil suit, not a criminal matter, and he has no authority to deal with a criminal matter.

These allegations are not made by the opposition. Let me go back. They're made in court documents filed both by the proponents on one side, that the deal and acceptance of the deal was overturned. They were made in reply to a Mr Lyons in those same court proceedings. It is not the opposition raising this out of the blue. These are folks involved in the deal and it involves the Ontario Realty Corp at a time when that corporation is involved in some of the most massive land sales in the history of this province.

The integrity of your government and the integrity of the Ontario Realty Corp are at stake here. The integrity of the tendering and bidding process for all Ontarians and for all corporations is at stake here.

We know who the players are: Mr Lyons, well connected to your party; Mr Miele, appointed by you to the Realty Corp. Very clearly, we don't know if anything wrong has been done here, but we know that both parties, in these court documents, have alleged bid-rigging and corruption at the Ontario Realty Corp.

It falls under your jurisdiction. You have responsibility to find out if it went on. If you're not willing to do that, as you seem to be satisfied with its operation, will you today again lift this cloud that's over the Ontario Realty Corp and call for an OPP investigation into this deal, and into the allegations made by Mr Lyons and by a proponent on the other side of bid-rigging and corruption at the Ontario Realty Corp?

Hon Mr Hodgson: I just want to point out that I know the member from Hamilton East and he has far too much intelligence and too much integrity to—I just want to correct the record on his accusation that I hired Tony Miele. He knows full well, and everyone in this House that's involved knows—the government knows it—that

the Ontario Realty Corp has a board of directors. They had a search and they hired Tony Miele to be the president of that corporation. The reason they hired him was because of his qualifications. He worked for the federal government on the Canada Lands Corp in charge of all eastern Ontario sales programs. He is immensely qualified for that job and the member knows that his accusation is false and it's got a separate board.

RENT REGULATION

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Southwest): My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Minister, recently there has been much talk in the media about maximum rent and its effect on tenants in this province. It seems to me that maximum rent was unfair when it was introduced by the Liberals in 1986 and it is unfair today. Under this provision, landlords are allowed to bank rent increases over several years and then hit tenants with huge rent increases all at once.

Let me quote David Cooke of the NDP from Hansard way back in 1990: "As of 31 March 1990, 323,000 tenant families in Ontario have been hit by rent increases above the government's guidelines." I am going to read through the following examples: 44 Dunfield Avenue, 44%; 100 Gamble Avenue in East York, 23%; 150 Cosburn in East York, 27%; 4918 Bathurst Street in North York, 29%; 147 and 175 Barrington Avenue in East York, 29%.

Minister, maximum rent obviously didn't work then and it doesn't work now. What are you going to do to abolish this terrible, ill-conceived pandering to landlords?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of the Environment, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I thank the honourable member for his question. There has been much confusion about this topic and I can understand why, because different people have different points of view and it depends on who you listen to.

For instance, the member for Parkdale-High Park, while calling on our government to fix their mess, says maximum rent is "a legal stickup," and that "there is no possible excuse to attack these families."

Although he is right that there is no excuse, I find it ironic that it is Liberal legislation that is causing the hardship in the first place. In the typical flip-flop fashion of the Liberals, I would like to remind the honourable member that Phil Dewan, who is Dalton McGuinty's chief of staff, has stated: "Eliminating maximum rent harms both landlords and tenants."

He goes on to say: "What are the consequences of preserving legal maximum rent? Simply to maintain the framework which has functioned for the last 10 years. There is no evidence of widespread problems resulting from the concept of maximum legal rents during the past decade, nor will there be in the next."

It is clear the Liberals don't care about tenants and that is why it has been up to this government to fix their mess.

Mr Newman: My supplementary question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing again. This afternoon before the House there will be a motion debat-

ed by one of the opposition members calling on this government to, among other things, "stop its attack on affordable housing and tenants."

Minister, I can't wait until later this afternoon so I'm going to ask you now: When are you going to stop this so-called attack on affordable housing and tenants?

Hon Mr Clement: I thank the honourable member again, and I'll answer it in this way. Again, there has been a lot of misconceptions out there. There are a lot of people talking about this issue. Mr Dewan, as I mentioned, is also quoted as saying: "The fact is, rental housing is a non-issue. Tenants across Ontario have more choice than ever and rents are static, that is, competitive."

He goes on to say: "The Conservative government has not removed rent controls. Though some Liberal Party literature took this line of attack, they should have recognized their own vulnerability. The 1986 Liberal legislation placed no limit on increases for sitting tenants as a result of capital improvements."

He goes on to say: "The question to be put to successful Liberal candidate Mike Bryant, who spread this line during the campaign, is simple: 'Were you ignorant of the facts or did you purposely distort them?'" Those are Mr Dewan's words.

On our side of the House I can say with pride that this government knows where it stands when it comes to caring for tenants and we have acted. As of June 17, 1998, we have frozen maximum rent and started phasing it out. We have provided the private sector with incentives to build and we are finally seeing a return on the cranes that were extinct for this province for so long.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a question for the Minister of the Environment and Municipal Affairs and Housing. It's regarding the Oak Ridges moraine and his letter on behalf of developers who wanted to see development take place on the Oak Ridges moraine.

I'd like to ask the minister if, in addition to the letter that he was copied—he was cc'd a letter and as a result of that he said he took action and wrote his own letter to the chair of the region of Durham. In addition to that, did the minister ever engage in a telephone conversation with any developer interested in the Oak Ridges moraine or any representative of any developer in the Oak Ridges moraine?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of the Environment, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): Not to the best of my recollection, unless you want to refresh my memory.

Mr Bradley: I'll try to help the member's memory along. He is quoted in NOW Magazine, which is a Reform-minded Toronto weekly, as you would know, as saying the following: "Enter Environment Minister Clement who tells NOW he was called by Tanenbaum's people: 'The pitch to me was there were plans for the

Toronto Symphony Orchestra to have a pastoral site,' says Clement. 'I'm not an expert, but as a way to foster the arts it seems like a great plan.'"

There's an indication from this article that indeed you were called by Tanenbaum's people, by his representatives, to discuss this matter.

Now that I've refreshed your memory, or perhaps you want to deny this, one of the two—I'll accept either—could you tell us what transpired in that conversation, and did it influence you in any way to send a letter on behalf of the developer in the Oak Ridges moraine?

Hon Mr Clement: I guess it was the preamble that led me astray, and I apologize if I got him round a wrong angle.

In fact I did have a conversation with the lawyer about the pipe, not about the development. In the course of that conversation, the TSO proposal did come up, and I indicated to him that I could not take a position on the development, but I was in a position to protect my legislation. I guess you saw an iteration of that or an interpretation of that in NOW Magazine.

FAINT HOPE CLAUSE

Mr Frank Mazzilli (London-Fanshawe): My question is to the Attorney General. I understand that section 745 of the Criminal Code, which falls under federal Liberal government jurisdiction, allows convicted murderers who have been sentenced up to 25 years in prison with no parole to apply for parole after serving only 15 years. This section I've come to know as the faint hope clause. I'm sure the House can appreciate my shock and amazement that a convicted murderer, who has been sentenced to life in prison with no parole, is allowed to apply for release after only 15 years. I would ask the Attorney General, does this clause really exist?

Hon Jim Flaherty (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): I thank the member for London-Fanshawe for the question. The member is correct, the faint hope clause does exist, and convicted murderers can be released after serving only 15 years of a 25-year sentence, a sentence which states "25 years without parole."

The federal government just doesn't understand the concerns the people of Ontario have about crime. For the last four years, the federal government has ignored Ontario's pleas to hold criminals, particularly young offenders, accountable for their crimes. Ottawa hasn't gone far enough to support victims of crime. Ontario has repeatedly asked the federal government to restore truth in sentencing and repeal section 745 of the Criminal Code, known as the faint hope clause. Under section 745 of the federal Criminal Code, convicted murderers sentenced to imprisonment without parole for 25 years can seek parole eligibility after only 15 years.

Mr Mazzilli: I would ask the Attorney General to describe to the Legislature what action our provincial government has taken on behalf of victims of crime and the people of Ontario to address the effects that section

745 and the faint hope clause have on victims and families in Ontario.

Hon Mr Flaherty: We responded to Ottawa's failure to reform the Criminal Code by announcing on October 4, 1999, that Ontario is the first province to establish a special fund to help family members of murder victims attend federal hearings reviewing killers' applications for early parole. This year's budget for the section 745 fund is \$100,000. Each family of a murder victim is eligible to receive up to \$5,000 towards expenses incurred in travelling to these section 745 hearings. The fund is the latest in the Ontario government's actions to improve victim services and to ensure victims receive the support and the respect they need and deserve.

MINE CLOSURE

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): My question is to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. As you know, the Royal Oak mine in Timmins was closed in September due to the bankruptcy of its parent company. This has resulted in the loss of about 300 well-paying jobs in Timmins. You will also know that there are two offers before the receiver, Price Waterhouse, to purchase this mine: one from a company called Kinross, which has an offer to purchase the mine in a closed-down state—no jobs—and who are currently trying to secure concessions from your government on environmental closure liabilities. The second offer is from a group of local investors who want to reopen the mine and rehire many of the laid-off workers.

My question to you is: Whoever buys this mine is going to need to come through your government to get operating permits and also to address the requirements of environmental closure plans. Will you commit to only deal with those people who are prepared to purchase that mine, reopen it and put the workers back to work?

Hon Tim Hudak (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): I thank the member for his question. We have had the opportunity to discuss this issue personally on a couple of occasions, and I anticipate we will in the future. To inform members of the House, unfortunately Royal Oak's properties did go into receivership some time ago, and a process has been in place since then and the properties have reverted to the receiver, PricewaterhouseCoopers. My understanding is that the receiver is currently in negotiation with one company, Kinross. I understand from media clippings and from the member that another offer has been put on the table, but the question does rest with the receiver. They're currently in negotiations.

I've had the opportunity to speak as well with Mayor Power of Timmins, who has a different perspective on what he sees as the best route for long-term investment in the Timmins area, to make sure that far into the future there will be jobs in the mining sector in Timmins. I appreciate the member's advice but, as I said, it lies with the receiver at this time.

Mr Bisson: Minister, there ain't no jobs because the mine is closed down, and Kinross has no intention of reopening it. That is the public record. There is a group of investors who are prepared to buy the mine at a fair price, compared to Kinross, and to put it back into production. The ball is in your court. They have to come to your ministry, to your government, to get all the operating plans and to deal with the environmental closure liabilities. Under the law, that is the responsibility you have to deal with.

So my question to you is: It's not up to Price Waterhouse, it's up to you. I want you to work with our community to make sure that whoever ends up buying this mine is committed to reopening it and rehiring the workers who were laid off. Will you commit to that?

Hon Mr Hudak: Again in response, I understand the receiver is in negotiations with at least one offer that is on the table. It remains to be seen how those negotiations progress. I appreciate the member's advice. Mayor Power of Timmins spoke with me recently as well, on his thoughts with respect to the Kinross offer, which he sees has good potential for long-term investment. I appreciate that the member has some opposite advice. As I said, the receiver is making the decisions.

The ministry's commitment to the Timmins area is very strong. There has been some very good news lately in terms of exploration of the Timmins area. I was very pleased to be in Timmins as recently as a week and a half or two weeks ago to announce a \$5-million investment from the northern Ontario heritage fund through the Mike Harris government for the gold mine tour and for the Shania Twain exhibit. That means more jobs in the Timmins area and more tourism in the Timmins area, and that demonstrates this government's commitment to northern Ontario and the Timmins area.

ONTARIO REALTY CORP

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): My question is to the Chair of Management Board. It has to do with the Ontario Realty Corp, which as he knows is a huge operation. He has responsibility for this on behalf of the public. The board of directors is "subject to direction from the Chair of Management Board." I understand from media reports that you said, "There was never an allegation of corruption made to me or any of my staff."

My question to you: Is it correct that over the last year and a half there was never an allegation of corruption at the Ontario Realty Corp made either to you or to any of your staff?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): The question they're referring to is a specific item around the process involving what is referred to as the Keg mansion. There was a series of articles in the spring and there were some articles written by Mr Barber of the *Globe and Mail*. He asked some specific questions on that. The matter on the specifics is before the courts. In reference to my office's participation, I was asked, "Did Mr Lyons ever talk to you?" No,

he never talked to me directly. He phoned my office in November. We sent back a message: "Here's the process. Here's the public information around this process."

1510

There was a letter that came in in December 1998 and that was referred to the ORC board of directors to have a look at. In the letter there was never any accusation of illegality. There was a question about the process involved that was taking place.

I just want to remind the Legislature there was no deal signed here, there was no agreement of purchase and sale. The process was looked at by the—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Would the Minister take his seat. Supplementary.

Mr Phillips: I asked you if allegations of corruption had come to you or any of your staff over the last year and a half. I'm gathering from your comments today that there were allegations that either you or your staff were made aware of. I understand that in late December or early January the president resigned. I understand that three board members resigned, whom you replaced. But again, my question is this: Over the last year and a half have there been any allegations to you or your staff of corruption at the Ontario Realty Corp?

Hon Mr Hodgson: The quote that he started out with was a very specific issue that's before the courts. Then he wants to know generically if we heard any allegations. There have been no specific ones that I am aware of, but I can check the records, if you wish. If there had been, I'm sure we would have followed the proper procedures inside the government to report it to the ORC board and they would take appropriate action or to go through the assistant Deputy Attorney General, criminal law division, depending on the nature of the accusation.

I don't have that at my fingertips today. I can tell you that when he started out on the quote in the newspaper, that was in regard to a specific question on a specific file.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): My question is for my honourable friend the Minister of Health. My constituents of Waterloo-Wellington are very interested in the issue of mental health reform. Members may recall that in 1998 the minister's parliamentary assistant, Dan Newman, the honourable member for Scarborough Southwest, did a consultation and a review of the mental health services across the province. In fact, the member consulted directly with my constituents on these matters.

Will the minister provide the members of this House an update of this government's mental health reform initiatives?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Our government has certainly indicated our very strong commitment to mental health reform and to the improvement of services for those who suffer from mental illness. Since 1995 we have invested over \$83 million into the mental health system. We are

reforming the system in a way that we focus on prevention and we ensure we have the community services in place. Of course, we also need to ensure that we have the hospital-based services in place as well.

In June 1998, last year, we announced \$60 million. That money is going to community organizations, funding for community assertive treatment teams and also an expansion of the community investment fund. As well, aside from the \$83 million, we have also announced \$45 million for supportive housing for the mentally ill and we are presently developing a very comprehensive housing policy.

Mr Arnott: In our Blueprint document, our election platform, the government made a commitment to ensure that people who pose a danger to themselves or others can be taken off the streets to get the care they need. Could the minister provide the members of this House with an update on our commitment to help people under these circumstances?

Hon Mrs Witmer: Yes, our government did make a commitment in our Blueprint to ensure that people who do pose a danger to themselves or others have the opportunity to access and receive the care they need. Presently the staff of the Ministry of Health are in the process of taking a look at how new legislation will be drafted. They are taking a look at what other jurisdictions throughout North America and elsewhere have done. We would hope that we could introduce those legislative changes in the very near future.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): I have a question for the Minister of the Environment. I've just returned from Durham regional council. They unanimously rejected the development proposal for 2,500 units, the proposal that you butted in on in support of the developer with your letter. They were outraged by your letter. They were flabbergasted. Almost every councillor proudly stood up and said they were going to decide themselves, despite your interference. To their credit, they said no to that application.

In your response to the member for St Catharines, you said that you spoke to a lawyer for the developers, the Tanenbaums. What is the lawyer's name, for the record, please?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of the Environment, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): Mr Diamond.

Mr Colle: Interestingly, today Mr Diamond was asked that specific question: "Did you, Mr Diamond, speak to anyone from the ministry or to the minister about the application?" Mr Diamond's specific response, on the record at Durham council today, was, "I spoke to no one at the ministry." Either Mr Diamond is wrong or you spoke to someone else. Who did you speak to? Did you speak to other developers in the Tanenbaum group besides Mr Diamond? Because Mr Diamond says he never spoke to you.

Hon Mr Clement: Let me say two things. First of all, on the issue that the honourable member raised first, it is the municipality's responsibility to take a position on the proposed amendments to the official plan. They've made that recommendation. I acknowledged that resolution. They fulfilled their responsibility. That's their decision to make; it's always been their decision to make.

I can tell you that I have not spoken to Mr Diamond about the development. Mr Diamond is correct: I've spoken to him about the pipe. If I can make it clear to the honourable members, once again, for the second week in a row, my job is to defend the class environmental assessment. That's my job as a minister. I was fulfilling my responsibilities as a minister. I did not take a position on the development. I did not take it then; I did not take it last week; I don't take it now.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): My question is for the minister responsible for women's issues. I'm aware that November is Wife Assault Prevention Month. Megan Walker, the director of Battered Women's Advocacy Centre, was quoted as saying, "In the 12 years I've been involved in women's abuse issues and violence against women, I really haven't seen the public awareness commitment I've seen over the last two years from all sorts of different providers."

Minister, can you tell me about some of the initiatives this government is undertaking to increase awareness of domestic violence in this province?

Hon Helen Johns (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, minister responsible for seniors and women): I'd like to thank the member for her keen interest in women's issues, especially in this important Wife Assault Prevention Month. Let me say first off that I'm very concerned about wife assault in Ontario. We all need to do better to ensure that we reduce and finally obliterate this horrible violence in the province. From the perspective of the province and the Mike Harris government, we have committed to ensure that we spend \$100 million on programs and services to prevent and address violence in the province.

This week and last week I've been involved in two very important initiatives which I believe will lead to a reduction in wife assault. The first was when Minister Tsubouchi and I went to work with Crime Stoppers to ensure that we came out with a video that talked about wife assault being against the law and let people know that they had an ability to call Crime Stoppers to help women who were in need of their help and might not be able to help themselves.

The other launch was a video this week called A Love That Kills. It was announced at Glenforest school. It talks about students who need to be cautious about entering into relationships where violence exists.

Mrs Munro: Minister, you mentioned the video A Love That Kills. Can you please tell us more about the significance of this video.

Hon Mrs Johns: I believe that this is a very important video for all young women in the province to see. First of all, it's very powerful. It's a tearjerking film that talks about the prevention and the early identification of abusive relationships that might happen with young people.

What it does is talk about a mother's story of a daughter who was killed by her ex-boyfriend. The mother is Dawn Speers, and she has a story and a commitment to this video which couldn't be surpassed by anybody. This video was funded by the Ontario Women's Directorate. It was funded with the help of CAVEAT, the National Film Board, the BC Ministry of Women's Equality and also by the Ministry of the Solicitor General. I'd once again like to thank Minister Tsubouchi for being involved in this.

If anyone here has young women who need this kind of help, I suggest they see the video.

ABORTION

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-East York): My question is to the Solicitor General. This is a frightening time of year for physicians and other health professionals providing abortion services in Ontario. Since 1994, the period between late October and Remembrance Day has seen five attacks by snipers. As we're all aware, a New York doctor was killed last year and before that three Canadians and one American were seriously wounded.

Last year my colleague Marilyn Churley, on behalf of our party, put forward a resolution in this House stating that federal, provincial and territorial governments must co-operate to provide adequate resources to police forces across Canada specifically to ensure the safety and security of all abortion providers. It passed unanimously, it was quite an accomplishment, but I have to ask, where's the action?

The fact is that the number of obstetricians and gynecologists willing to perform abortions has decreased significantly over the last years. I have to ask you if you're going to stand by and let extremists take away women's right to safe, legal abortions. What are you doing right now to protect those doctors who provide abortion services?

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Solicitor General): Everyone who lives in this province deserves to be safe—and that's everyone. That's why it's very important for us to support our efforts to support the police in this province, so they can provide an adequate level of protection for everyone without exception in this province.

That's why we've embarked upon a quality assurance exercise across the province, to make sure that all police forces, regardless of where you live, whether you live in Brockville or Markham or Niagara Falls, are able to provide protection in all ways for all crimes across this province.

We believe as well in our initiative to try to help the police in this effort. We've embarked upon a community policing program. The end result will be 1,000 new

police officers on the front line, on the streets, who will assist to make sure that citizens of this province are protected. This is an investment of about \$150 million which we think is well spent.

Ms Lankin: We all want all Ontarians to be safe, but we're talking about people who are specifically targeted at this time of year, and we're talking about a resolution passed in this House which you and your party supported and on which there's been no action.

Others are taking action. The Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada has sent out notices to physicians telling them to wear body armour. Let me quote from the circular: "Consider wearing body armour, including at home. Do not put on or take off your body armour in public, including parking lots and public bathrooms." The OMA has sent out security advisories to physicians. It's deeply disturbing that they have to take these precautions. In the midst of all this panic and fear, I have to say that there is one voice that is notably absent, and that is your government's.

Why are you not taking a leading role in speaking out on this issue against violence and intimidation, and why have you not taken this opportunity to assure physicians and nurses who provide abortions that it's your government's priority to ensure that they're safe, that women can and must continue to have safe and legal access to abortion? Why have you not given the public assurances of actions your government is taking to ensure the safety of abortion providers?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: The Ontario Provincial Police are aware of the situation currently. They are on alert for it, as are many of the municipal police forces. There is an international police task force that is investigating these incidences. I can only reiterate my message from before, that it is very important for us to protect all citizens in this province. It matters not where or how or who, all people deserve to be safe in this province. Certainly that's the direction we have with the OPP, and the OPP certainly acknowledge that, and they participate in making sure that people are safe in their communities and participate as well in this international police force.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): My question is to the Attorney General. I will try to make the question as difficult as the member for London-Fanshawe, but I don't think I can get there.

Weeks ago your ministry referred the now infamous Gilchrist affair to the Ontario Provincial Police for investigation. We on this side of the House have every confidence that an excellent job will be done by the investigators from the OPP.

I want to speak up about the tenor of what is happening in the House. Today we found that we've got ministers who have been named in concerns, we've got ministers who seem to be inconsistent at best and down-right confused about who they spoke to and who they didn't speak to. We've got the Minister of the Environ-

ment mentioned, we've got the ex-Municipal Affairs minister mentioned, we've got the Management Board chair mentioned, and we also have heard that there are people linked to the Premier's office who have been mentioned. We've also got new allegations arising that the Ontario Realty Corp is in a mess. We've got a web that continues to grow.

Knowing that the records from the OPP investigation are not made public unless criminal charges are laid, and knowing that a very dark cloud hangs over this House, and knowing that there are unanswered questions to this growing problem, I'm asking if the Attorney General will now call a public inquiry and be helpful to this House, and bring dignity and respect back to this House by calling that public inquiry.

Hon Jim Flaherty (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): The member may know that when allegations are made against any member of this House, against any member of the Ontario Public Service, against any minister, against the Premier, should there be such an allegation there is a protocol that is followed. It is strictly followed. It is followed in all instances. The report goes to the assistant Deputy Attorney General, criminal law division, and the job of the assistant Deputy Attorney General in charge of the criminal law division is to review the allegation being made and to make a determination, which he does, about whether to refer it to a police force or not. This is absolutely strict, and I can assure you that it is followed.

Mr Levac: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Again, for the umpteenth time, this protocol has been mentioned, and I would like to know whether or not the Chair feels that because it's been mentioned it needs to be tabled.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I have mentioned, I guess this is the third occasion, that it is referred to but it has not been quoted at length and I have ruled that it is not a point of order. This is the third time I've ruled on that.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: In answer to a question today, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing stated, and I believe I quoted him correctly—I don't have Instant Hansard—that his government provided the private sector with incentives to build. I would request unanimous consent for the minister to give a statement as to what incentives he has actually given to the private sector to build housing in this province.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? I heard some noes.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I want to indicate my dissatisfaction with an answer given by the Minister of Finance today, and I'm asking for a late show. I'm processing that and will have it in your hands forthwith.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I thank the member very much. All the members will know that if they do

table that, they need to table that with the table. Also, the members should know that the table will inform the appropriate minister.

1530

PETITIONS

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I have a petition here which is signed by a number of residents of Davenport, but also a number of residents from the west end of Toronto, and it reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario government's decision to slash education funding will lead to the closure of many neighbourhood schools, including one of the most community-oriented schools like F.H. Miller Junior School; and

"Whereas the present funding formula does not take into account the historic and cultural links schools have with their communities nor the special education programs that have developed as a direct need of our communities; and

"Whereas the prospect of closing neighbourhood community schools will displace many children and put others on longer bus routes; and

"Whereas Mike Harris promised in 1995 not to cut classroom spending, but has already cut at least \$1 billion from our schools; and

"Whereas F.H. Miller Junior School is a community school with many links to the immediate neighbourhood, such as the family centre, after-school programs, special programs from parks and recreation, and a heritage language program;

"Therefore we, the undersigned citizens, demand that the Harris government change the funding formula to take into account the historic, cultural and community links that F.H. Miller Junior School has established."

Since I agree with this petition, I'm signing my name to it.

PARAMEDICS

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): "To the Honourable Lieutenant Governor and the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Health this past spring amended O. Reg. 501/97 under the Ambulance Act so that paramedics are considered no longer qualified to do their job if they accumulate a minimum of six demerit points on their driving record; and

"Whereas this amended regulation has resulted in at least one paramedic being fired from employment"—and again that's now six people, two of whom are from my hometown of Hamilton—"and

"Whereas the Ministry of Health's regulation is far more punitive and harsh than the Ministry of Transporta-

tion's, which monitors and enforces traffic safety through the Highway Traffic Act; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Transportation mails out a notice to drivers at six to nine demerit points and suspends a person's driver's licence at 15 points for a 30-day period; and

"Whereas none of the other emergency services in Ontario, eg, fire and police services, are held to the same standard or punished so harshly; and

"Whereas this amended regulation is not needed since other sections of the Ambulance Act protect the public against unsafe driving and/or criminal behaviour by paramedics (specifically O. Reg. 501/97, part III, section 6, subsections 8, 9 and 10); and

"Whereas the Ministry of Health's actions are blatantly unjust and punitive, and they discriminate against paramedics;

"Therefore we, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, beg leave to petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately eliminate any references to the accumulation of demerit points during employment from O. Reg. 501/97 under the Ambulance Act (specifically part III, section 6, subsection 7), thereby allowing the Highway Traffic Act to apply to paramedics; and

"To order the immediate reinstatement of paramedics who have been fired under the regulation."

I continue to support the cause of these paramedics and add my name to this list of petitioners.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr Brian Coburn (Carleton-Gloucester): I am pleased to present a petition on behalf of the member from Nepean-Carleton, the Honourable John Baird:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned taxpayers of Ontario, wish to document and convey our requests that

"The Legislative Assembly of Ontario recognize the need for a public elementary school in the Longfields-Davidson Heights community;

"The Legislative Assembly of Ontario recognize that Longfields-Davidson Heights has a current population of 12,000 and a growth rate of 18% per year, and that 1,000 public school children from this community are expected to enter junior kindergarten by September of 2002;

"The Legislative Assembly of Ontario realize that the designated facility servicing Longfields-Davidson Heights, Merivale Public School, is at maximum legal capacity and a second temporary location cannot accommodate more than one year's growth;

"The Legislative Assembly of Ontario allow the use of the education development charges to build new public schools."

It's signed by myself and the Honourable Mr Baird.

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): My colleague from Thunder Bay-Atikokan and I continue to receive thousands of signatures on petitions related to the inadequacy of the northern health travel grant. I have some here today that I'd like to read.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the northern health travel grant was introduced in 1987 in recognition of the fact that northern Ontario residents are often forced to receive treatment outside their own communities because of the lack of available services; and

"Whereas travel, accommodation and other costs have escalated sharply since the program was first put in place, particularly in the area of air travel; and

"Whereas the Ontario government has provided funds so that southern Ontario patients needing care at the Northwestern Ontario Cancer Centre have all their expenses paid while receiving treatment in the north which creates a double standard for health care delivery in the province; and

"Whereas northern Ontario residents should not receive a different level of health care nor be discriminated against because of their geographical locations;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, petition the Ontario Legislature to acknowledge the unfairness and inadequacy of the travel grant program and commit to a review of the program with a goal of providing 100% funding of the travel costs for residents needing care outside their communities until such time as that care is available in our communities."

I have hundreds and hundreds of signatures, and I'm very proud to add my name to that petition.

HIGHWAY SAFETY

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, which reads as follows:

"Whereas 13 people died during the first seven months of 1999 on Highway 401 between London and Windsor; and

"Whereas traffic levels on all sections of Highway 401 continue to increase; and

"Whereas Canada's number one trade and travel route was designed in the 1950s for fewer vehicles and lighter trucks; and

"Whereas road funding is almost completely paid through vehicle permit and driving licence fees; and

"Whereas Ontario road users pay 28 cents per litre of tax on gasoline, adding up to over \$2.7 billion in provincial gas taxes and over \$2.3 billion in federal gas taxes;

"We, the undersigned members of the Canadian Automobile Association and other residents of Ontario, respectfully request the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately upgrade Highway 401 to at least a six-lane highway with full paved shoulders and rumble strips; and

"We respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario place firm pressure on the federal government to invest its gasoline tax revenue in road safety improvements in Ontario."

I concur, and I will affix my signature to it.

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas 13 people died during the first seven months of 1999 on Highway 401 between London and Windsor; and

"Whereas traffic levels on all sections of Highway 401 continue to increase; and

"Whereas Canada's number one trade and travel route was designed in the 1950s for fewer vehicles and lighter trucks; and

"Whereas road funding is almost completely paid through vehicle permit and driver licensing fees; and

"Whereas Ontario road users pay 28 cents per litre of tax on gasoline, adding up to over \$2.7 billion in provincial gas taxes and over \$2.3 billion in federal gas taxes;

"We, the undersigned members of the Canadian Automobile Association and other residents of Ontario, respectfully request the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately upgrade Highway 401 to at least a six-lane highway with full paved shoulders and rumble strips."

I agree with this petition, and I affix my signature.

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): Earlier, my colleague the member for Thunder Bay-Superior North read into the record a petition that is being signed by literally hundreds of residents in our communities and across northwestern Ontario who are concerned about two-tier access to health care in northern Ontario and the fact that they have to pay often considerable costs to access medically needed care. Because my colleague has already read this petition today, I will not read all the "whereases." I will simply read:

"Therefore, we, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, petition the Ontario Legislature to acknowledge the unfairness and inadequacy of the northern health travel grant program and commit to a review of the program with a goal of providing 100% funding of the travel costs for residents needing care outside their communities until such time as that care is available in our communities."

Again, it's been signed by a number of concerned residents. I have affixed my own signature in full agreement with their concerns.

1540

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I have a number of petitions from various schools. The residents who have signed these petitions are very concerned about school closures, and there is such public anger out there that I have received many of these. I will read the one from

Earlscourt public school. It's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the Ontario government's decision to slash education funding could lead to the closure of many neighbourhood schools, including one of the most community-oriented schools like Earlscourt public school; and

"Whereas the present funding formula does not take into account the historic and cultural links schools have with their communities nor the special education programs that have developed as a direct need of our communities; and

"Whereas the prospect of closing neighbourhood schools will displace many children and put others on longer bus routes; and

"Whereas Mike Harris promised in 1995 not to cut classroom spending, but has already cut at least \$1 billion from our school budget; and

"Whereas Earlscourt public school is a community school with many links to the immediate neighbourhood, such as day care, a games room, an open gym, fitness classes and a site for sports activities;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned citizens, demand that the Harris government changes the funding formula to take into account the historic, cultural and community links that Earlscourt public school has established."

Mr Speaker, since I agree with this petition wholeheartedly, I will sign this to present to you.

HEALTH CARE

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): I have another petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, headed, "Say no to the privatization of health care."

"Whereas we are concerned about the quality of health care in Ontario; and

"Whereas we do not believe health care should be for sale; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government is taking steps to allow profit-driven companies to provide health care services in Ontario; and

"Whereas we won't stand for profits over people;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Do not privatize our health care services."

This is a good petition. I concur with the content and I will affix my signature to it.

HIGHWAY SAFETY

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas 13 people died during the first seven months of 1999 on Highway 401 between London and Windsor; and

"Whereas traffic levels on all sections of Highway 401 continue to increase; and

"Whereas Canada's number one trade and travel route was designed in the 1950s for fewer vehicles and lighter trucks; and

"Whereas road funding is almost completely paid through vehicle permit and driver licence fees; and

"Whereas Ontario road users pay 28 cents per litre of tax on gasoline, adding up to over \$2.7 billion in provincial gas taxes and over \$2.3 billion in federal gas taxes;

"We, the undersigned members of the Canadian Automobile Association and other residents of Ontario, respectfully request the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately upgrade Highway 401 to at least a six-lane highway with full paved shoulders and rumble strips; and

"We respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario place firm pressure on the federal government to invest its gasoline tax revenue in road safety improvements in Ontario."

I am pleased to add my name to those signatures.

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): This petition is of such importance that residents from all over Ontario have signed this, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas 13 people died during the first seven months of 1999 on Highway 401 between London and Windsor; and

"Whereas traffic levels on all sections of Highway 401 continue to increase; and

"Whereas Canada's number one trade and travel route was designed in the 1950s for fewer vehicles and lighter trucks; and

"Whereas road funding is almost completely paid through vehicle permit and driver licence fees; and

"Whereas Ontario road users pay 28 cents per litre of tax on gasoline, adding up to over \$2.7 billion in provincial gas taxes and over \$2.3 billion in federal gas taxes;

"We, the undersigned members of the Canadian Automobile Association and other residents of Ontario, respectfully request the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately upgrade Highway 401 to at least a six-lane highway with full paved shoulders and rumble strips; and

"We respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario place firm pressure on the federal government to invest its gasoline tax revenue in road safety improvements in Ontario."

This petition is so important that I'm signing it as well.

OPPOSITION DAY

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

LOGEMENTS À PRIX ABORDABLES

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): It gives me great pleasure to move the following motion:

Be it resolved that, in the opinion of this House, the Mike Harris government should stop its attack on affordable housing and tenants, restore rent controls, and implement the recommendations of the Golden report.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): Mr Speaker, on a point of order: I just want to clarify that the time is going to be equally split among the parties in this debate. I understand there is an understanding among the House leaders on that.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): That may be a point of understanding; it's not a point of order.

Mr Caplan: It's very welcome to have the opportunity to speak to this very important motion. Certainly, at first glance, it gives me the chance to reaffirm the Ontario Liberal Party's support and commitment to tenants and to reconfirm our desire for the province to take some real action on the homelessness issue. I'm very pleased that many of my caucus colleagues will be joining this debate. I know that they will speak to the government's policies that have impacted specifically on their communities across Ontario. I certainly hope that government members are listening and too will be supporting this motion.

The real concern all members of this House should have is that we're faced with a government that talks the talk, but, when it comes down to it, the Harris government does not walk the walk in protecting tenant rights and preserving their access to justice. Plainly speaking, they are all talk and no action.

They talk about a process which serves tenants. What tenants in this province have is the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal. I've already proven in this House and from the minister's response that the Harris government agenda is to diminish access to reasonable justice for tenants. The Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal is closing hearing locations across the province. They already have done so in Richmond Hill, out in eastern Ontario and have amalgamated things in the Belleville area. The minister confirmed that more of the same is on the way. The Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal has closed very important document filing offices, which, as all members of this House will know, is a very key part of the process that this government has instituted, because tenants now have five calendar days to respond when an application is made against them.

The minister has talked in this House about teleconferencing and video conferencing. Quite frankly, video conferencing doesn't work unless you have high-speed Internet access, which doesn't exist in much of the province. Teleconferencing, as any lawyer will tell you, is unfair to the respondents because an adjudicator will have a very difficult time over the telephone being able to assess the credibility of the various proponents. These are options that the government has held out that it has implemented, but in fact I've spoken to people in Belleville; I've spoken to people in York region. The minister has said that these have been offered, but to date I can find no one who has been offered these types of options. So while the minister considers and studies, tenants are

losing one of the most fundamental rights, the right to defend yourself and have reasonable access to justice. I think that shows.

We have some data from the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal. It shows that of the people who were served with orders for eviction, 53%—well over half—don't even dispute the claim. They don't even go and defend themselves. Why is this? Yesterday we heard in the media that in an analysis of data, one third of tenants don't even receive the order for eviction that has been served against them. One third of people don't even know that something outstanding is happening.

1550

An equal number don't even know that they have to appear within five days, because the form that Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal uses is incredibly confusing, and you have to truly have an advanced degree of communication ability and skill to be able to decipher the form. That's why people who are tenants are being unfairly disadvantaged by this government.

The minister said the study was only interim, that it's only in Toronto and it doesn't have broader implications. I spoke to the Centre for Equality Rights in Accommodation—in fact, this government cut their funding in 1996. Obviously, the minister and the Premier and members of the Harris government aren't interested in knowing how their legislation, how their actions have disadvantaged tenants. If you truly have the desire to know—but I think you already do—then restore the funding.

The Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal has said, through the minister, that they're going to do more with less. There's no evidence of that. In fact, they're doing less with less. They really have no plans to correct any of these problems.

The assault on tenants in Ontario continues. I've had contact with legal clinics around the province. They tell us that tenants are intimidated by the process. They all say the same thing, that many see the notices but just move on. They don't even know that there are various processes for appeal.

When Al Leach, the minister, introduced the legislation, when it was passed, he promised access to justice with their new process, but so far they've delivered nothing. We have a process which favours landlords, we have cutbacks in the hearing process, and we have an unwillingness to change when real problems are brought to the attention of this government. They talk a good game but they're not able to deliver any real justice for tenants, and they really don't seem to care. Quite frankly, they need to stop their needless attack on the tenants of Ontario.

One of the prime examples is the regime of vacancy decontrol and the gutting of real rent control in this province. When the this government brought in their reforms, they promised it would not affect affordable housing. That's not the case. We have Statistics Canada and Canada Mortgage and Housing data which shows that tenant income is on the decline yet rental costs are increasing. The guideline of 30% is used by landlords

and others to assess what is an acceptable level for payment of accommodation costs. Half of Ontario's tenants pay 30% or more of their combined family income before tax on rental accommodation; a payment of 50% of your income, you're considered to be at risk of being homeless. That number has crept up over the last few years and is quickly approaching 20% of all tenants. That is shocking, and really demonstrates the problem and the magnitude.

The government also promised that there would be affordable housing provided in this area of vacancy decontrol. Al Leach stood up and said that he guaranteed that within two years 10,000 new rental housing units would be built in Ontario. That's what the Harris government said, and it's not happening, not at all. In fact, in 1998, in Toronto alone a grand total of 159 rental units were newly created. This year, 1999, 18 units have been created through the first eight months. It is not only getting worse but we are losing, on a net basis, rental accommodation in this province. I greatly await the Canada Mortgage and Housing numbers which are going to be coming out shortly. I think that they too will confirm it.

This is not just a Toronto problem. I've talked to people in Hamilton. I've talked to people in Kitchener-Waterloo, in Barrie, in Peterborough, in Muskoka. It's the same pattern that repeats itself over and over. You have to ask yourself, has all the Harris government's talk about increasing rental stock and affordable housing meant any real action for tenants? I think the conclusion is clear. In a word, no. Their Tenant Protection Act should rightfully be called the tenant rejection act, or even perhaps the tenant eviction act.

This government fails to realize that their policies have resulted in much of the homeless problem that we have today. The Premier and the ministers and the members of this government love to point fingers. They like to say it's the municipalities or it's the federal government. They're first in line when it comes time to passing the buck in doing anything. But that's not surprising, because they're just trying to divert from their abysmal record.

In the election campaign in 1995, they promised to implement shelter allowances in Ontario. In fact, they haven't done anything about it; it's another broken promise. I shouldn't say that, because it's even worse: They cut the shelter allowances that previously existed and also cancelled all the affordable housing projects that were on the drawing board. They claim they are going to fund some of the shelter costs. The province used to fund 100%, and they have downloaded 80% of the cost onto municipalities. I have confirmed figures from the city of Toronto that the provincial level of support for shelter costs is now down to 73%, simply off-loading costs and provincial responsibilities to municipalities.

The government has promised to make lands available for shelter space. The city has provided land, but the province has yet to do so and I doubt it ever will—perhaps only to developers and others.

The Golden report called for no net loss of rental units, and yet we have Tory activist Jane Pepino appearing before the Ontario Municipal Board and successfully challenging the right of cities to protect rental housing stock.

The Golden report called for new support for housing beds, especially for those with mental illnesses. At the same time we have a government that is closing hospital beds around the province. To date, the government has made a commitment but nothing has translated.

Finally, the government has said it will be spending \$100 million. This promise is eight months old, and not one penny has been spent yet. In fact the money is not provincial money; it comes from the federal government. So the province takes from the federal government on one hand, makes commitments it has no intention of fulfilling and then calls on the federal government to provide even more. There is no generosity in the Harris government towards the vulnerable and the unfortunate who have found themselves in these circumstances, and that is why this motion is very timely. It directs the government to fulfill its responsibilities and to stop its attack on tenants, and I ask all members of the House to support this very timely motion. I look forward to further debate.

Mr Bisson: It's with great pleasure that I get into this debate. I want to say, first of all, that we'll have a couple of other members, the member for Trinity-Spadina and the member for Nickel Belt, speak on this.

I want to say up front that I'm going to vote for this motion the same way I voted in favour of rent control legislation when we brought it to this House back in the early 1990s under the Bob Rae government. In 1996, when I was the housing critic, we brought a motion into the House to restore the NDP rent control legislation, and I voted in favour of that as well. I will vote in favour of this Liberal motion even though the Liberals voted against our rent control legislation back in the early 1990s.

In 1996 the Liberals voted against my motion, which would have restored the NDP rent control. The Liberal caucus voted against it and said "yes" to landlords and "no" to tenants. How they forget. The wonderful thing about Liberals is that it's like one size fits all. They're like chameleons. They put on a jacket that says on one side "I'm a New Democrat" and on the other "I'm a Tory."

Interjections.

Mr Bisson: I will Liberal-bash because you guys deserve to get bashed for the positions you take.

At the height of this thing, we know this guy Jean Chrétien, the Prime Minister of Canada? He's what party? He's a Liberal as well. What has the Liberal government in Ottawa done? It has gotten out of the housing business. It has divested its responsibility as a federal government to deal with housing and gotten completely out of the housing business.

Now the Liberals come to this House and say to us: "We believe in rent control. We want to help tenants

around this province. Trust us, the Liberal Party of Ontario." You have no credibility on this issue, and I take exception to your guys coming forward in this Parliament and saying, "We're all for rent control."

I'll vote for your motion because I'm all for anything that puts forward the ability to deal with tenants' concerns when it comes to rent control and other issues around housing. I was consistent in 1990, I was consistent in 1996 and I'm consistent today in voting in favour of rent control in this particular debate.

1600

I have to say about the Conservatives that they are also consistent. I disagree philosophically with where they're going, but the Tories opposed our legislation when we brought it into this House in 1993, they opposed the motion I put forward in order to restore NDP rent control, they are opposed to the concept of rent control, but at least they're honest about it. They're telling tenants, "We don't want rent control, we don't believe in rent control and we're not going to propose rent control; we're opposed to it."

The Liberals—a little bit of this, a little bit of that. Who knows where they're going to go if they're ever the government. It's whatever way the wind blows. I wouldn't trust them for one second if they were government and bringing in rent control, because I also remember what happened under the David Peterson government. They brought forward rent control legislation—

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): Rent review, not rent control.

Mr Bisson: Rent review, actually. They didn't bring in rent control. That's a very good point. They brought rent review to try to accommodate some sort of concession between landlords and tenants. All they did was create this huge bureaucracy that became a real problem not only for landlords but for tenants. In the end I still support the idea of rent review, but they're certainly not to be commended on their position.

On the question of public housing, I really have to make the point to the government that you were wrong back in 1995 to cancel the housing projects that were put forward by the NDP government and had been done. We are now starting to see the difficulty that the cancellation of those projects has put tenants in across this province.

I want to bring to this House the special situation we have up on the James Bay coast. We have an acute housing crisis. We have a federal Liberal government that is not willing to deal adequately with the housing issues on the James Bay coast. We have people in communities like Kashechewan, Attawapiskat, Moose Factory, and the list goes on, where you're basically putting 20 and 30 people into a house because there's inadequate housing in those communities. You go into the community of Kashechewan—wonderful people really trying to organize things in their community, dynamic, but they lack the tools because the federal Liberal government refuses to deal with the inadequate housing problems we have within the James Bay communities.

If the Liberals in this House here in Ontario are proposing to do something about housing, please start by talking to your federal caucus. Go talk to your Liberal people up in Ottawa and tell them that the very least they can do is to try to address the housing problems we have in the James Bay community. It's unacceptable that a child or anybody else has to be forced to be in a situation of living in a house with 20 and 30 people in it in order to have a roof over their heads. You cannot study properly in that kind of environment, there's no ability to deal with having your own space, as a young person to try to deal with growing up—and what it means for the adults in those situations. I wish you were consistent and would at least go talk to the federal Liberal government and deal with the issue of housing when it comes to James Bay.

J'ai besoin de dire à la fin de ce discours que je sais que mes collègues du Parti libéral ont un gros problème, mais je demande seulement une affaire. On connaît l'opposition du NPD : on a toujours été et on va toujours être en faveur de la législation qui va rechercher les droits des locataires à travers la province et qui protège les loyers. C'est quelque chose qu'on a fait en opposition, c'est quelque chose qu'on a fait quand on était au gouvernement, où on a pensé de la législation en faveur des locataires, et on le fait encore en tant qu'opposition.

Le Parti libéral a toujours de différentes positions qui dépendent de la journée et qui dépendent un peu d'où s'en va le baromètre politique dans la journée. Je demande au Parti libéral de prendre au moins une position et d'essayer de la garder pour une fois. Vous avez voté des deux bords de cette affaire-là, dépendant de quel bord le vent s'en va. On va vous supporter sur votre motion parce qu'on pense que c'est important. Mais je veux dire—je ne peux pas dire le mot « hypocrite » parce que ce n'est pas parlementaire, et je retire ce mot-là parce que je ne voudrais pas dire un mot qui n'est pas parlementaire, mais je ne trouve pas un autre mot pour décrire la position que le Parti libéral est en train de prendre.

Monsieur le Président, avec ça je veux dire que je vais voter en faveur de la motion, mais je garde mes principes et je voterai encore une autre fois à cette assemblée.

Mr Brian Coburn (Carleton-Gloucester): I'd like to share my time with the member from Willowdale and the member from Scarborough Southwest.

It's a real pleasure today for me to rise and speak and join in this debate and talk about the record on rent control. It gives us an opportunity to talk about our record and some of the positive things that we've done to improve the situation in Ontario.

If we go back to 1995 and look at the huge challenge that we inherited—"huge challenge" is I guess an understatement; the total mess that we inherited—as a result of the dysfunctional rent control programs of the Liberals and the NDP, we did have a huge challenge in front of us to try and put a plan in place that would serve us well into the new millennium.

In 1986, the Liberals introduced maximum rent. The minister of the day was Mr Curling. The maximum rent

was, I suppose, the short name that was given to this piece of legislation, but what it in fact did was permit landlords to increase rents up to a maximum amount, and failing to do that, they could bank those increases. For example, if the allowable increase in one specific year was 5% and the landlord raised it about 2%, the landlord then could bank the 3%. You can just imagine the potential chaos down the road if this went on for five, six, seven years. The poor tenant gets slammed with an increase that could be 15% or 20% and had absolutely no control over that.

That was a piece of legislation that was absolutely flawed. But in 1992 the NDP really didn't do very much to improve it. They continued on with that same philosophy.

In 1995 this government recognized that there was a huge problem with respect to rent and tenants and landlords. The present system did not work. We had a track record now of about 10 years and the potential for it to work was simply not there. Therefore, we enacted and brought forward the Tenant Protection Act, which was proclaimed June 17, 1998. We recognized that the process that had been in place with the previous governments was short-sighted and was absolutely hazardous and dangerous to renters.

The short title was "maximum rent." I just want to get back to that. People said there was rent control. Yes, there was rent control, but it was kind of camouflaged by maximum rent. Therefore, if the landlord didn't bring in the maximum rent in the specific year and brought in something less that the tenants seem to be happy with, they had a false sense of security, not knowing or realizing that the difference between the rent agreed upon and the maximum rent could be banked and that this would place that individual or individuals in a disastrous situation in the future.

With the Tenant Protection Act we eliminated the maximum rent policy. For those tenants before that act came into place, they were protected by our Tenant Protection Act. We had stopped the cumulative effect of the maximum rent. The Tenant Protection Act will eventually phase out maximum rent.

For those who have signed leases after the Tenant Protection Act came in, thank goodness the maximum rent act and philosophy did not apply.

1610

Under the Tenant Protection Act, as soon as the tenant's rent is either equal to or greater than the amount of the maximum rent, a landlord is no longer eligible to apply maximum rent. Furthermore, the maximum rent applies to tenants who have occupied their units since before the TPA was proclaimed. In other words, a landlord cannot carry over maximum rent to a new tenant.

The old system didn't work, and tenants frequently lived in inadequately maintained units where you had faucets dripping, paint peeling, toilets that wouldn't flush, elevators that wouldn't work more often than not, broken locks on the front door that hadn't been fixed in years, just to name a few of the problems.

It did not work for landlords either.

At the same time, in creating the Tenant Protection Act, we needed to create an environment that allows landlords to make a return on their investment so that they can improve existing maintenance and build new buildings.

Ontario's housing stock had become increasingly run down, and millions of dollars in repairs were not being done because the previous legislation discouraged landlords from doing major renovations by unfairly restricting their ability to finance repairs.

Under other governments, the annual rent increase was significantly higher than under ours. In 1992, the annual rent increase guideline was 6%. In 1987, the annual rent increase guideline was 5.2%. In 1985, the annual rent increase guideline was 6%. Our record shows a guideline consistently between 2.8% and 3%. Furthermore, the annual rent increase guideline for 1999 is 3%, and for the year 2000, it is 2.6%, the lowest amount in the 25-year history of rent control in Ontario.

To explain the guideline and how it is calculated: It is calculated using a consumer price index that is averaged over a rolling three-year period. As a result, in addition, the 10% reduction in the education portion of the property taxes that this government implemented will benefit tenants over the next three years.

Now the annual rent increase guideline is fair and sensible and it results in reasonable rent increases for tenants and landlords.

Another misconception: It's incorrect to state that there is no rent control in Ontario. Every tenant who has occupied an apartment since the Tenant Protection Act was implemented continues to be protected by rent control, only there is something that is affordable and that they do understand, and there is nothing hidden that will sabotage them along the way.

Under the new legislation, vacancy decontrol has been implemented. Vacancy decontrol does not remove rent control. Rather, vacancy decontrol allows the landlord and the tenant to freely negotiate the terms of rent instead of rent that reflects the market value of the apartment.

Rent control applies to tenants who have moved into an apartment since the protection act was proclaimed.

There are some very clear guidelines under the Tenant Protection Act, very straightforward and very clear-cut. Under the Tenant Protection Act, a sitting tenant's rent can only be increased by the amount of the annual rate-increase guideline that is set by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and only once every 12 months, and only if the tenant has received 80 days' written notice of the increase.

Once again, just to remind members opposite, the annual rent increase guideline is 3% for 1999 and 2.6% in the year 2000. Actually, this would be a multiple of the guidelines that were in the previous governments' days.

I'd just to talk a little bit more about the Tenant Protection Act that was proclaimed on June 17, 1998. Under that act, most residential rental accommodation units were covered, including high-rise rental units,

single-family homes, basement units, rental condominiums, care homes and mobile homes. The Tenant Protection Act deals with all aspects of residential tenancies.

The Tenant Protection Act also was guided by the red tape initiatives of this government to streamline and make more efficient; legislation that combined six pieces of legislation that governed landlords and tenants, plus the building code and the Planning Act, into one cohesive piece of legislation. The Tenant Protection Act levelled the playing field for both tenants and property owners.

The Tenant Protection Act was created with a number of initiatives and goals in mind: To protect tenants from unfair rent increases and arbitrary evictions and harassment and to provide a strong security of tenure; to focus protection on tenants rather than on units; and to create a better climate for maintenance and investment in new construction, thereby creating jobs.

Just to expand on that a little bit, this government has taken other initiatives that have helped with the creation of rental units. The very fact that we scrapped the land transfer tax for first-time buyers of new homes has encouraged people to buy new homes. If you look at the construction boom we have witnessed this year, it is evident that new homebuyers are taking advantage of the attractive environment we've created for them to get on with their lives and invest in a new home. This has helped create jobs. It's helped strengthen the economy and it's helped create rental vacancies. I don't want to minimize the impact of cutting taxes and cutting red tape that has enabled first-time homebuyers to go out and take advantage of no land transfer tax. All of this has a ripple effect in helping us provide more rental accommodation.

We also had a view to get tougher on landlords that failed to take care of their buildings, to provide a faster, more accessible system, to resolve disputes between landlords and tenants by moving disputes from the courts to the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal, to deliver a more streamlined, cost-effective administration with less red tape, and to create a climate where people will invest in new rental housing stock and existing rental housing stock.

This government is different than the former governments. Under the old Liberal regime, rental housing starts declined by 21.4%; total housing starts declined by 40.5% between 1987 and 1990. Under the next government, the NDP, it was even worse. They failed to act while rental housing starts plummeted by 74.4% during their mandate and total housing starts declined by 43%.

Under the Mike Harris government between 1995 and 1998, private rental unit starts have more than doubled. In 1995 there were 610; in 1998, 1,270. Total housing starts have increased by 50%. All of this helps to create jobs and inspires hope for the future—a strong economy for a strong Ontario.

Unfortunately, and it was mentioned by the member opposite, from Timmins-James Bay, there's been one partner missing at the table, and that's been the federal government.

1620

The federal government seems unwilling to encourage developers to build new rental housing. In fact, apartment builders pay 75% more in GST and higher mortgage insurance than home builders. This has been brought to their attention certainly by our leader time and time again, and there has been no movement. Actually it's something similar to tax cuts creating jobs. Possibly, through the leadership of the Mike Harris government, the message is finally getting through to the senior level of government, and they may realize that tax cuts do create jobs.

Our past experience in Ontario has shown that governments do not build housing cost-effectively; in fact, we're more of a disincentive to developers. In the period from 1985 to 1995, it is more than obvious that throwing money at the problem has not resolved it; in fact, it drove us further into debt, and excessive taxes and regulation imposed by previous governments have in large part created the current shortages in rental housing.

We are working on better, longer-term solutions for housing. We believe the role of this government and future governments is to foster an environment where new housing is created by the private sector and we continue to remove barriers to building new rental housing. Former governments didn't get it then, and they don't get it now: that a strong economy gives us a brighter future and a stronger Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate.

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): I'm very grateful to have four minutes or so, I believe, to address and support the resolution of my colleague.

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs): Only four minutes.

Mr Sergio: I'm so delighted to hear the government member saying that it's only four minutes. It's because of the graciousness of the democratic system that we have in Ontario and under this government that we are enjoying so little time. It is because of this government that we don't have enough time to address the issue.

The issue in front of us today is a very important one.

Interjections.

Mr Sergio: The government can heckle as long as they want, but as soon as they were elected, they said, "We are going to protect tenants in Ontario." That is until the minister found a chair in this House and said, "We are going to eliminate rent controls in Ontario." He went about and introduced legislation, and the Premier said that any change we will be bringing to rent control legislation will have to benefit the tenants of Ontario first.

Now we know, sadly all too well, what indeed that piece of legislation meant and continues to mean and will mean for the thousands and thousands of tenants in Ontario. It means complete desperation, because they have no idea where to go. Just let me remind the Premier, the Minister of Housing and the members on the government side that we are, I would say, at the door of a very long and cold winter, and I would like them to know

where those people, the homeless people, will be going during those very cold and long winter nights and months.

I have to give it to the government member who just spoke, because yes, the government may have helped to create less than 1,200 units, but we have a 10-year-long waiting list of 40,000 people, for the benefit of the member. What is the government doing? Absolutely nothing. Since the previous minister introduced legislation and that government approved it, the Harris government went into hibernation and forgot about tenants in Ontario. It is a complete shame, really, because they are caught in a situation where if they have to move, for whatever reason, they will have to pay whatever rent on the next unit they find. This is not sitting too well with a lot of the seniors in Ontario, who live not only under rent control but on a very measly income, many of them on the single Canada pension and the other government pensions they get; that's it. They find it very, very difficult.

I would like to say a lot more because in that rent control legislation they have given the local municipality the power to demolish existing rental units, on top of the elimination of rent control. This adds insult to injury to all the tenants in Ontario.

I congratulate the member here who has brought the resolution in front of us today. I hope the members on the government side indeed will reconsider their position and support the motion that is in front of us. At least they can say: "Yes, we have created a problem. Rents are skyrocketing. Rental units are continuing to diminish." Not only are new units not being built, but they are allowing municipalities to demolish existing rental units.

The stock is going down while the demand is increasing continually. Now we have some 10-year waiting periods. I don't think it's fair. I don't think it's fair for this government to force this particular situation on the tenants of Ontario. I hope that we can all support the resolution from the member for Don Valley East.

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I won't speak very long this afternoon, even though I would like to, because I would like to leave a large portion of time to my esteemed colleague from Trinity-Spadina, who has a very large number of renters in his constituency. But let me say just a few things here this afternoon in response to this opposition day that has been put forward by the Liberal Party.

I am always astonished at how the Liberals can play both sides of the fence all of the time; I truly am. I always know where the Conservatives are coming from. I am usually opposed to where they are coming from, but at least I know where they are. I never know where the Liberals are, because on any given day of the week they are changing their position on every single issue that we are facing.

I was part of a government between 1990 and 1995 which made it a priority to introduce rent controls in Ontario. I very well remember that legislation put forward by my former colleague Dave Cooke. I remember

the position this gang over here took. The Liberals voted against the NDP legislation to have rent controls on Ontario. That's how concerned they were about tenants between 1990 and 1995. The Ontario Liberal Party voted against the rent control legislation that our NDP government brought in. That's where they were on rent control.

What's even more interesting is that same Ontario Liberal Party then voted against the legislation brought in by the Conservatives to end rent control. They were on both sides of the fence on the same issue. They don't know if they're coming or going and they sure aren't protecting tenants. They shouldn't pretend to even want to protect tenants, because nothing in terms of what they have done would point to any concrete evidence whatsoever that the Liberal Party cares about tenants.

Having said that, I can't leave this issue without saying that I don't believe the Conservative Party cares about tenants either. They're both in the same boat.

I looked at their legislation that was passed in the last session supposedly to protect tenants—

Mr Marchese: The Tenant Protection Act.

Ms Martel: The Tenant Protection Act. Thank you very much, my colleague from Trinity-Spadina. Of course, that legislation did nothing to protect tenants either. Tenants in Ontario who are being gouged by this current Conservative government should well remember that they got no protection under the Conservatives in the last mandate. They certainly got no protection when the Liberals were in power and they got nothing from the Liberals in terms of even advocating when we were in government. Both the parties voted against our rent control. So there you go.

Mr Speaker, I should say that I haven't had a chance to congratulate you. You have not been in the chair when I have been speaking. I just want to say that I'm very pleased that we have a Deputy Speaker from northern Ontario. I offer you my condolences in the hard job that you have ahead of you, Mr Speaker.

Let me say, though, on the second issue—and this has to do with affordable housing; this is a very serious issue, and I won't even touch the incredible problem that we have in this province with respect to homelessness right now—but I am always amazed, again, when I hear the Liberals talk about their concerns for affordable housing and point to the Conservatives and demand that the Conservatives do something. Frankly, both parties should do something.

1630

Since 1993, the federal Liberal government in Ottawa has had no housing policy whatsoever—none, absolutely none. The federal government abandoned affordable housing, abandoned seniors, abandoned families with a low income as far back as 1993, when they stopped participating with the province of Ontario and other provincial jurisdictions in affordable housing projects. So it's just a little hard to take today to have an Ontario Liberal Party come into this Legislature and talk about what the government should do about affordable housing.

What are you saying to your federal cousins in Ottawa about affordable housing, folks? We have a federal Liberal government under Jean Chrétien that has a \$21-billion surplus in the EI account, most of that gotten off the backs of workers, who should have more benefits for EI, not the cuts that they've received under federal Liberals. But having said that, if the government at the federal level wanted to do something about housing, they have more than enough money at their disposal to do something concrete to make sure that people aren't going homeless, to ensure that seniors and low-income families have the housing they need and can live in decent, affordable apartments in this city and every other city across this province.

It's a little bit hard to take to hear the Liberals trying to criticize the Conservatives when their own cousins in Ottawa, the people who are from their own party, have completely abandoned affordable housing since 1993—abandoned, and with the huge surplus that they've got.

Now, I don't want to let the Conservatives get away on this, because they abandoned affordable housing too. They just did it two years after the federal Liberals abandoned—

Hon Frank Klees (Minister without Portfolio): On a point of order, Speaker: Just before the honourable member goes into the rest of her speech, she was doing so well and I would hate for her to lose her track of thought here and divert attention to this side of the House. I really think that the attention on the federal government—

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): I don't think you have a point of order.

Member for Nickel Belt.

Ms Martel: Thank you for the intervention. Look, it's criminal what both of you are doing with respect to affordable housing, which is nothing. Absolutely nothing. I don't want you to get away with it here this afternoon.

Let's be clear. You abandoned affordable housing too, you just did it two years later, after the federal Liberals. We are in a position in this province now where we have thousands and thousands of people who are living in accommodation that they can ill afford because your rent controls have not worked. We have thousands of other people who are living on the streets, not just single individuals but families crowded in hostels, families on the street.

This government and the federal Liberal government have got to come to terms with the fact that developers in this province are not building affordable housing units. They have no interest in doing that. There's no money in it for them. Despite the changes you made in your alleged Tenant Protection Act, there's no evidence that there has been an increase in building affordable rental units for families who need it and for seniors who need it. That's a fact.

Today, as we deal with this motion that is before us, the Conservative Party as well has to look at why that has happened and has to understand that they are doing nothing to deal with that very serious situation.

The member from Carleton-Gloucester spoke a little bit about the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal, so that gave me an in to make some comments about that very tribunal right now.

In northern Ontario, as a result of the changes this government made to establish the housing tribunal, we had one mediator—one, all across northern Ontario—to handle disputes between tenants and landlords. The fact is that, as of this month, November, that one mediator who was in place trying to deal with all tenancy issues across northern Ontario has also had her job surplus. So from here on in, all landlord-tenant disputes that would otherwise be handled by a mediator in northern Ontario will now be handled by a mediator in either eastern Ontario or southern Ontario. Clearly, that means those issues are going to be handled by teleconference or videoconferencing.

The blame for this has to go right back to the Conservative Party with the development of the tribunal, because even in the original plan for staffing of the tribunal and staffing of the mediation unit, there was not a position for a mediator anywhere in northern Ontario—not a one—not in northeastern Ontario, not in northwestern Ontario. You, Mr Speaker, would know full well the distances between those two parts of the north.

The only reason that we have had the benefit of a mediator up until this month was because when the tribunal was established there were some transitional monies that were available to deal with the changeover and there were 45 rental officers in our area who were surplus, courtesy of this government, so the northern Ontario regional office took some of the money and hired a mediator to work out of Sudbury to handle landlord and tenant issues across the whole north. But it was only because of that surplus money and only because of all the people who were losing their jobs that we even had this single individual working in Sudbury to service all parts of northern Ontario.

The government has the responsibility to ensure that it does not discriminate against landlords and tenants in northern Ontario, and the government is doing that very thing under the current system that is in place. The government, however, has an opportunity to change that because we know that at the present time KPMG is doing an operational review of the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal. That was ordered as a part of the changeover to the new system. One year or so after the tribunal went into effect, there had to be an operational review to determine if the new system was working, if clients were happy, what the caseload was and what kind of new staffing arrangements would have to be arrived at in order to serve people in all parts of the province.

I know that operational review is almost complete. I certainly hope the staff at KPMG have identified a problem that we have identified in northern Ontario; that is, landlords and tenants should have access to the same mediation services as do tenants and landlords in all other parts of the province. The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing should take the recommendations which I'm

sure will come from KPMG and encourage colleagues at cabinet to staff up mediation services in northern Ontario so that we have at least one mediator in the northwest and at least one in the northeast.

I understand that the volume, the caseload, is not as high in northern Ontario as it is in Metropolitan Toronto, for example, but that doesn't mean the government should discriminate against landlords and tenants in our part of our province. This can be clearly resolved by appointing two mediators to handle the two parts of northern Ontario so that people get face-to-face personal access to a mediator.

I will wrap up now because I have stolen far more time than I should have from my colleague from Trinity-Spadina, but I do want to say again that I am always clearly amazed when the Liberals can come in and argue both sides of the fence on an issue that's so important. I know where the Tories stand. They deserve to be condemned too when it comes to rent control because they certainly haven't done anything, and there is certainly a huge problem of homelessness because this Conservative government has backed out of affordable housing projects. But the Liberals had a chance to vote for rent control between 1990 and 1995—they voted against—and their federal cousins have done nothing since 1993 to create affordable housing, despite a \$21-billion surplus in the EI account.

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Southwest): It's my pleasure to participate in the opposition day motion today in the name of the member for Don Valley East. I want to begin by saying that I will not be voting in favour of the motion.

The need for affordable rental housing is a subject that affects residents across Ontario, and indeed affects many residents in my riding of Scarborough Southwest. In fact, the last national census indicated that 45% of single family households in Scarborough Southwest consisted of rental accommodation. This compared to an Ontario figure of 27%. At the same time, the average family income in Scarborough Southwest was 18.3% below the provincial average. Therefore, I have a great deal of interest in the motion before the Legislative Assembly today.

The contention that somehow this government is attacking affordable housing and tenants and abandoning rent controls and ignoring the Golden report is ludicrous. In fact, in the year 2000 the rental increase guidelines will be 2.6% and those will be the lowest in the 25-year history of rental regulations in our province. This is a fact that the Liberals and NDP don't ever want to hear mentioned, so I'm going to repeat it again: In the year 2000 the rental increase guidelines will be the lowest in the 25-year history of rent regulations in Ontario.

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As the member for Carleton-Gloucester indicated, the Tenant Protection Act established the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal as an independent adjudicative agency responsible for administering the act and informing the public concerning the legal rights and obligations of both

landlords and tenants. Despite recent reports to the contrary, the number of applications to the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal, including evictions, has remained constant.

As Mr Phil Dewan of the Fair Rental Policy Organization stated in the June-July edition of Fair Exchange: "There has been no increase in eviction applications since landlord-tenant matters were moved from the courts to the tribunal. Claims of skyrocketing numbers of evictions are blatant lies!" In fact, in the last year of operation of the courts, the number of applications was 65,050 versus 65,000 for the first year of the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal.

The Liberals and NDP want to talk about what this government has done to rent controls, but I would encourage them to look at the facts. The facts I want to quote are from the period 1985-99. Let's look at what happened under the Peterson Liberal regime from 1985 to 1990. Rental increases in 1985 were 6%; in 1986, 4%; in 1987, 5.2%; in 1988, 4.7%; in 1989, 4.6%; in 1990, 4.6%. This represents an average allowable rent increase under the Liberals of 4.9%.

There are countless examples during the Liberal years where rent increases went far beyond the allowable guidelines. In my own riding of Scarborough Southwest, residents of several high-rise complexes discovered at first hand how the Liberals were not committed to rent controls in the province. In February 1988, the tenants of 3161 Eglinton Avenue East, in Scarborough, were hit with a rent increase of 20.16%. In January 1989, the residents of 44 Pharmacy Avenue saw their rent increase by 12.9%. In September of that year, the residents of 1445 Kingston Road were handed an increase of a whopping 22.58%. Not to be outdone, they went after the residents at 1 Brimley Road, and the rent increases that were assigned to the residents there were 17.21%. So much for the Liberal record on rent control.

Then, in 1991, along came the NDP and their tax hikes. That's a story for another day. We're going to talk about their record on rent control. In 1991, 5.4%; in 1992, 6%; in 1993, 4.9%; in 1994, 3.2%. The average allowable rent increase under the NDP was 4.9%, the same as the Liberals.

Then, in 1995, the Mike Harris government was elected. Let's look at those numbers: in 1995, 2.9%; in 1996, 2.8%; in 1997, 2.8%; in 1998, 3%; in 1999, 3%; and as I indicated, for the year 2000 the increase will be 2.6%. This makes the average allowable rent increase under the Mike Harris government 2.9%.

Let's review the numbers one more time: the average allowable rent increase under the Liberals, 4.9%; under the NDP, 4.9%; and under this government, 2.9%. I ask you, which government has demonstrated its commitment to tenants in this province?

For the honourable member to imply that the Harris government has in some way done away with or denigrated rent controls is simply not factual. In order to build new, affordable rental units in our province, we have introduced measures to reduce the cost of new

rental housing with more favourable property tax treatment, rebate provincial sales tax on affordable housing and make government lands available. In addition, we have streamlined the entire land use process in Ontario and passed the new Planning Act, which significantly shortened the time frames for decision-making. For example, the official plans that used to take nearly two years to approve are now dealt with in as little as three months. Official plan amendments that used to take 15 months to process are now approved in two months or less. Subdivision applications that used to take 33 months are now processed in five months. Consents have gone from nine months to three and a half.

As a result of these improvements, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing's caseload has been nearly cut in half. The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing has become the single contact for provincial land use planning, allowing us to provide one-window planning service.

In addition, this government has updated the Ontario building code; we wanted a building code everyone could work with.

We wanted to continue our efforts to streamline the provincial municipal building processes as recommended by the Red Tape Commission. Ultimately, the goal is to make the construction-approval process timely, efficient, fair and consistent in every building department, fire department and provincial office across Ontario, while protecting public safety.

However, there's still much more to be done to encourage construction of new rental units. Unfortunately, we can't do it without the co-operation of other levels of government.

The member laughs. We have repeatedly asked the Liberal government in Ottawa to reduce the high GST on the construction of new apartments. Repeatedly, they have refused. Perhaps the member from Don Valley East, with his connections in Ottawa, might be able to offer his assistance on this matter.

We have also asked the federal Liberal government in Ottawa to reduce the high mortgage-insurance premiums for the construction of new rental housing. What was the Liberal government's response? They doubled the premiums that year. I say shame on them.

The Mike Harris government has been very proactive in working to prevent the dwindling supply of rental housing in Ontario. The 275,000 social housing units and rent-geared-to-income subsidies in Ontario have been maintained. The government has also committed \$45 million this year to fund 1,000 new dedicated supportive housing units, which will provide support in housing to individuals with problems such as mental illness and addiction.

Under the former Liberal regime, rental housing starts actually declined by 21.4%. Under the NDP, the situation got even worse. Rental housing starts plummeted by 74.4% during their mandate. I say shame.

Let's look at what our government has done: We've eliminated the first \$2,000 of provincial sales tax in new

rental unit developments, we've created a new lower tax class for rental properties, we've committed to use public lands to create a minimum of 500 units of affordable housing, we've placed limits on the scope of services for which municipalities can levy development charges, we've streamlined the planning and approval process and we've rationalized large sections of the Ontario building code.

Under a Mike Harris government, between 1995 and 1998, private rental unit starts more than doubled.

Unfortunately, the Liberal government in Ottawa seems unwilling to encourage the construction of new rental housing. Apartment builders pay 75% more GST and higher mortgage insurance than home builders do. The Liberal government's action plan in Ottawa—or lack of an action plan, as I want to refer to it—to deal with this problem of affordable housing and its direct impact on homelessness was to appoint a minister responsible for homelessness. Unfortunately, this appointment came with no power, no decision-making authority and no money. The Liberal government in Ottawa's failure to play a role in encouraging the construction of affordable rental housing units has been the subject of much heated debate for months.

On March 25, at the Toronto-sponsored summit on homelessness, one of the actions of Mayor Mel Lastman was to urge the federal government to pursue waiving the GST on building materials used in the construction of affordable units. The mayor went on to say, "The federal government must own up to its responsibility." I couldn't agree with him more.

In response, of course, what did the federal government say? Federal Liberal GTA minister David Collenette gave us a temper tantrum. Minister Collenette said, "We are not going to stand there and listen to these distortions, this outrageous conduct by the mayor of Canada's largest city, when the government of Canada is indeed doing its part." When Mayor Lastman then simply asked, as only he can, "Where's the money?" Minister Collenette stormed out of the meeting.

The mayor didn't go after the province, he went after the federal Liberal government. Even the Toronto Star, on March 27, their editorial said: "Ottawa has an important role. The federal government can waive the GST on building materials used to build affordable units. It can free up federal land at no cost to developers for the construction of affordable housing."

"It can offset the capital costs of building affordable housing with grants or tax incentives."

"Clearly, there's no lack of ways for Ottawa to help." The key part is this: "What's been lacking until now has been the political will to act."

1650

If the honourable member for Don Valley East really wants to go after a government that has failed to do its fair share, perhaps he can start with his federal cousins in Ottawa. Past experience in Ontario has proven that governments do not build housing cost-effectively. In fact, the previous government's record in this area

borders on the abysmal, with hundreds and hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars disappearing into the black hole that was called the Ontario Housing Corp.

Furthermore, government's intrusion into this area is at best a disincentive to private sector construction. Throwing money at the problem has not resolved it. Rather, this approach used by past governments has only served to push this province further into debt. Excessive taxes and regulations imposed by previous governments have in part played a large role in creating the shortage of housing in our province.

We are working on better longer-term solutions for housing. We believe that the role of government is to foster an environment where new housing is created by the private sector, and we are continuing to remove barriers to building new rental housing.

I am proud of this government's record in dealing with the issue of affordable rental housing. Despite the opposition's posturing to the contrary, the Mike Harris government's record in this area, compared to those of the previous Liberal and NDP governments, is exemplary. I believe that Phil Dewan, of the Fair Rental Policy Organization, summed it up best when he said:

"The re-election of a Progressive Conservative majority government of Ontario is welcome news for the rental housing industry. With the Harris Tories ensconced at Queen's Park for another four years, the Tenant Protection Act, which has been in force for less than 12 months, will be given the time it needs to function effectively."

After that ringing endorsement from Mr Dewan, I want to congratulate him on his appointment as chief of staff to Liberal leader Dalton McGuinty. That's whom he works for now.

The motion on the floor today is unfounded and ill-conceived. I reiterate my opposition to it.

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): I'd like to talk about a housing problem and I'm going to suggest a solution. The problem is demolition and condo conversion. In the riding of St Paul's and across Toronto, and also in the city of Hamilton and other areas, there is a problem with respect to the demolition of apartments and the problem is this: There's a very low vacancy rate, for example, in Toronto—less than 1%. If we lower rental stock and the vacancy rate is less than 1%, there's nowhere for these people to go. So on Tweedsmuir and on St Clair and all over the city of Toronto, thousands of tenants are being affected by apartment demolitions in a rental market in which less than 1% of apartments are available to them. Where are they going to go? They can't go to the Royal York Hotel while the apartment is being converted, if it's being converted into condos. They're going to go out on to the streets. That's the problem.

The problem was caused because we had a change in law. The old law ensured that the city, the municipality, set the criteria for demolitions and conversions. It was part of the evolution of our housing laws. It began with legislation brought initially by the Bill Davis Tory government and evolved over the years to the point

where there was a set of criteria for apartment demolitions which looked at matters such as vacancy rates.

Then along came the Tenant Protection Act. The minister at the time guaranteed development. We were told there were going to be more apartments built. But rental stock, we now know, is going down, not up. The Anne Golden report, as the member for Don Valley East said, recommended that we never let the rental stock go down. At least as a matter of policy we never let laws or criteria sit on the books which will let rental stock go down; at least as a matter of policy, we never let laws or criteria sit on the books which will let rental stock go down. Yet that's exactly the situation we have right now. The city of Toronto cannot set the criteria for when there can be a demolition, as they could under the old law. The Ontario Municipal Board can only consider matters of zoning and density, and not matters of vacancy rates. They can't consider the fact that people who live in the buildings on Tweedsmuir and on St Clair, who are elderly and disabled, who have lived in these buildings for 25 years, have nowhere to go.

That's the problem. In such times we need a solution. What my colleague the housing critic, Mr Caplan, the member from Don Valley East, has proposed—we have sent a letter to the mayor of Toronto and we have asked Toronto city council to co-operate in passing a private bill which would create an exemption, at least for the city of Toronto, and if any other city wants to bring a private bill, then they can do the same thing, which ensures that the city gets back the powers to control criteria for apartment demolitions and condo conversions.

The motion has passed city council. It's been endorsed by the city. The bill is going to go before city council. It had unanimous approval before and it will have unanimous approval again. Then it will be before this House, and at that time the choice is going to be made: Is this government going to be part of the problem or part of the solution? Is this government going to recognize the flaw in the legislation and create the exemption, or is this government going to vote against it? Are they going to play politics, or are they going to tackle the issues? We look forward to what happens when this bill goes to committee.

Mr David Young (Willowdale): I want to thank my colleagues at the outset for splitting the time with me this afternoon. While I appreciate it, I don't have a great deal of time. There are some points that I wish to raise during this debate.

I want to begin this afternoon by clearing up some misconceptions, some inconsistencies, that appear to be held by some of the members opposite, particularly concerning this government's record on social housing.

In 1995, Mike Harris made a commitment to end the public housing boondoggle in this province, and let me say to you that that was a boondoggle that benefited big developers more than any other we have seen.

Under the Liberals and NDP, public housing was in a shambles. In 1995, government subsidies averaged nearly \$1,000 a month for a two-bedroom unit. Those watching

in this chamber and those watching across this province through television will understand how outrageous and unacceptable that is, and was.

The Provincial Auditor at the time said that the capital costs of buildings and of building these units were often far higher than the market value. In our first mandate, the government set about to fix a system that was clearly broken.

Taxpayers currently spend about \$1.5 billion every year to subsidize social housing. Taxpayers subsidize each non-profit unit to the tune of approximately \$10,000, each and every year. There are approximately 275,000 units of social housing in Ontario, and taxpayers must receive more value for that \$1.5 billion they spend each and every year.

We are committed to reforming and simplifying the social housing program. The social housing reform process that we have engaged in has involved various stakeholders: tenants, housing providers, municipalities and the province. A pause, Mr Speaker, to point out that municipalities in particular are very important participants in this program, and municipalities are understandably concerned with costs: capital repair costs, interest rate liability and so on and so forth.

1700

As well, providers are seeking greater autonomy and certainty in their funding arrangements. But before we continue social housing reform, we must have a new housing agreement, and this new housing agreement must involve the federal government. We want to make social housing cost-effective and responsive to the needs of our communities, but without all three levels of government at the table, that simply will not happen.

I appreciate the fact that those lawmakers in Ottawa who have a responsibility in this area, the Liberal Party, have appointed a minister to look into this matter. We're all appreciative of the fact that they are cognizant that this is a problem that needs to be addressed. Unfortunately, in spite of what might be the minister's good intentions, nothing, but nothing, has happened to advance this. Nothing. The federal minister of housing the homeless has travelled from coast to coast to investigate this problem, and while she's doing so she stays in five-star hotels. It's very nice.

And what has she concluded? We heard recently that she has concluded there is a problem. Well, Minister, with the greatest respect, we knew there was a problem. We knew this was a problem, and as soon as Anne Golden tabled her report, we came forward with some very tangible, very real solutions. We're still waiting for the federal government to come to the table. I'm hopeful they will be at the table shortly. There's a place for them; in fact, in reality, we cannot begin until they are there.

Social housing programs need to be simplified to make them easier to administer and better able to meet the needs of low-income families, and we've made significant progress in this regard. The foundation for a more streamlined, cost-effective and efficient social housing program exists.

Ontario's housing stock has been constructed under a variety of different programs over the years—Mr Speaker, you'd be familiar with that—and each had its own set of rules and different funding arrangements. The social housing stock is a valuable asset and the province has ensured that that particular stock has been well maintained and remains viable.

Our goal is one-window access to all social services, including social housing. By integrating these services at a local level, it will make it easier to make one system available for all the people who need it and who use it.

On January 1, 1998, we transferred the funding responsibility for social housing to municipalities as part of the local services realignment. On March 23 of this year, the province announced that \$50 million in savings will be used for the rent supplement program for low-income people. This initiative is entirely consistent with the promise we made to the people of Ontario in the Common Sense Revolution. That document said, "We will end the public housing boondoggle that profits only the large property developers and return to a shelter subsidy program for all Ontarians who need help in affording a decent level of shelter."

The people's money is better spent on people than on bricks and mortar and profit for developers. Shelter allowances can be an important means by which to deal with the affordability problem. Unfortunately, previous governments have tied up housing subsidies in new mortgages and expensive social housing. As a result, this money was not available to be allocated to a shelter allowance program without disrupting the existing housing programs and exposing the province to mortgage defaults.

As I indicated earlier, this is not a problem that can be easily resolved by any one level of government, and once the federal-provincial housing agreement has been finalized, the province will provide an additional 10,000 rent supplement units. That's very, very important, and I hope the federal government will assist us in this regard shortly.

Let me say in the short time I have remaining that this government clearly wants to state on the record that homelessness is a real and serious problem. Unlike Minister Bradshaw, who's still attempting to determine whether we have a problem and just how serious it is, and then how she'll deal with it one day, maybe, if her cabinet colleagues agree, we know there is a problem and we have reacted quickly. However, it's important to remember that it's a complex problem, and no one issue or one level of government will provide the solutions we need. Homelessness is a problem that will require long-term solutions and a multidisciplinary approach to the solution.

Homelessness requires all levels of government to work together. I want to say that this isn't just an urban issue; I've heard my friends on the other side talking about what happens in urban areas. It's an issue throughout Ontario. I am hopeful that the signing of the new social housing agreement that I referred to earlier in my

remarks this afternoon will enable Ontario to create a new \$50-million rent supplement program to provide accommodation for the 10,000 lower-income families and individuals who have been referred to.

I appreciate that I have very limited time left, but I want to say that under the program the rent supplement units will be allocated to municipalities on the basis of need. Three quarters of the units will be in existing rental buildings and one quarter of those units will be allocated to newly constructed rental buildings, because we now have a system in place, we now have a climate, where there will be new construction, and you heard some of my colleagues talk earlier about the phenomenal increase in new units. That will continue because of what we've done.

In addition, I want to say that we'll eliminate the impact of the PST on building materials used in construction of affordable, multi-residential rental units. That is one of many proposals we put forward. We put them forward earlier this year, immediately after Anne Golden tabled her report. They're still on the table. We're ready to take action in this regard.

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): Mr Speaker, before I start my remarks, I'd like to bring to the House's attention my nephew Ryan Clancy, in the gallery. He's here today as part of "Take Your Grade 9 Student to Work." This morning we were at Durham regional council and this afternoon, along with the Prime Minister, the Premier and the mayor of Toronto, attended an announcement about Toronto's waterfront. Based on my observations of his attendance here today, he probably will not be looking forward to politics as a career.

I am delighted to have a chance, however brief, to join in debate on the motion brought forward by my colleague the member for Don Valley East.

A lot of attention today has been focused on issues of rental housing protection, which are extremely important to me in my riding, which has the highest proportion of tenants of any riding in Ontario, some 78.3%. Later this year, in December, I will be representing tenants of 670 Parliament, 135 Rose Avenue and 99 Howard in their hearing before the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal. We participate on a daily basis trying to assist tenants in their dealings with landlords.

Today, however, in the brief time I have, I'd like to bring to the attention of this House the opportunities that exist for all of us to participate in and support practical measures on a personal basis to assist in the creation of housing stock.

Earlier in this debate the member for Etobicoke Centre, the Minister of Labour, mentioned that the government has made lands available to Habitat for Humanity. I wish to correct the record. Earlier, Nick Volk, who heads up Habitat for Humanity in Toronto, was here in the gallery. They have been working diligently with all levels of government in the Toronto area to try to get some land donated so they could, as a millennium pro-

ject, build 20 houses next year. These are houses targeted at the working poor.

So far, the government opposite has not offered any resources for that, and I encourage the Minister of Labour to take up the challenge I present to him today to work to find those lands for Habitat for Humanity.

I would also like to extend a challenge on a personal basis to all members of this House, and I will do so in writing later on. It's a challenge that I'm working on. The challenge includes finding volunteers, working with Habitat to raise funds to help get products for builds and to be physically involved in the builds that go on. Obviously, land is an important part of this. There are 14 chapters of Habitat for Humanity in Ontario, and it's growing. This is one practical measure that each of us can support in our own constituencies, so that working poor families can have housing, pay mortgages and get on with building better lives.

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I'd also like to draw to the House's attention the presence of three other members in the members' gallery, led by a guy named Kevin Parkes. Kevin Parkes is someone who grew up in Etobicoke Centre, as I did, someone I played hockey with, and someone I reconnected with during the most recent election campaign. At that time, Kevin Parkes was homeless and was living in a shelter system. More recently, along with his colleagues who are here today, they pooled their resources and created what I think is a model that all of us should work towards, a live-work housing model where they work on community economic development issues, where they join together their social assistance cheques to pay for rent. They've got themselves off the street. They're working on creating economic opportunities for themselves and they save the government money. Five people sharing one space costs much less than five people relying on shelter supports every single night.

The last thing on this practical basis that the government can do, that they can act on today if they meaningfully support creation of housing stock, is to look very carefully at the initiative that is before us in Regent Park, to redevelop a portion of Regent Park, increase densities, change the mix and improve the lives of people in that area.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate? The member for Trinity-Spadina.

Mr Marchese: Thank you, Speaker. It's good to have a friend in the Speaker's chair, because from time to time some Speakers are not too friendly to us.

I'm very happy to have this opportunity to speak to this resolution presented by the member from Don Valley East. I want to tell you as well, and tell the Liberals, that I'm going to be gracious and somewhat kind, if I can, because the member from St Paul's lives in my riding and I'm a bit afraid that he won't take my sign in the next election. I don't want to hurt them in any way that might jeopardize that close relationship we have with each other, so I'm going to be kind. So when you hear the

word "Liberal," I'm not trying to hurt them, I'm just trying to point out some facts.

Mr Speaker, do you remember mon ami M. Leach? I miss him here. I do and I was thinking of him when I thought about what I might say. I just want to draw your attention to a quote of his because I learned so much from him. He vowed, "The Tenant Protection Act would spur developers to begin building 10,000 new rental units in two years." He vowed that he would do that. "The whole purpose of this is to get more units built so that the tenants can have a choice." That's mon ami M. Leach saying that.

Two years have passed. There is little choice in Toronto's rental market and almost nothing being built. In fact, according to the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp, a mere 167 rental units were added to the city's stock last year and another 119 in the first eight months of this year. We have a millennial housing disaster on our hands as we speak. Then you hear the retorts by the government members: "Here are the facts. The opposition says this. We present the facts."

What worries me is that they never once admit or acknowledge that perhaps we might be having a problem and we're struggling to solve it. That's what hurts me and I'm sure hurts people like Cathy Crowe, a public health nurse, who are out on the streets every day, and more so in the winter months but generally throughout the whole year, trying to deal with the homeless in the city of Toronto. It must hurt people like her to listen to Tory members say, "Here are the facts." Well, I just presented some facts and I've got more facts that I want to present to this discussion.

This is another point that I want to make that's drawn from Taking Responsibility for Homelessness: An Action Plan for Toronto. It's quite weighty; they've done a good study. In the introduction to chapter 1 they say, "The homeless population in Toronto is on the rise. More people are living in the streets and using shelters. In 1996, almost 26,000 different people used the shelter system in Toronto. There is rising pressure on drop-ins, food banks and other emergency services. The number of evictions is increasing," contrary to the so-called facts presented by the member for Scarborough Southwest. "Waiting lists for social housing are getting longer. As of June 1998, more than 100,000 people were waiting for social housing."

When the Conservative members speak to this issue, they need to be less ideological and more sensitive to the facts that are presented by people who have helped to develop reports of this kind. Because it isn't just responding to an opposition member who in their view is speaking ideological things that can be refuted by the mere fact of saying, "Here are the facts." They really have to try to respond to these types of reports, that speak to the crisis we have in housing—homelessness not just as a city disaster, but as a national disaster.

I want to draw your attention as well, and the attention of the Conservative members that might be listening, to a report done by the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Associ-

ation and the Cooperative Housing Federation of Canada. They did a report called *Where's Home?* about six to eight months ago, and they have an update on that report which I want to read on the record very shortly. This report is a picture of housing needs in Ontario, and it isn't done by politicians; it isn't drafted by a New Democrat. It's drafted by people who have housing expertise and who are trying to find a solution to the problems, but first they identify what the problems are.

I want to quote from a report which is still draft—tomorrow they're doing a conference on this matter. It's a sequel to the other report that I just showed. It's *Where's Home?*, part 2. I will read the conclusions and summary, from which I will make some comments afterwards. I want to do that so that the comments that are raised through this report hopefully will appear in their minds, if not the audience, that it's drawn from factual information done by studies by people who are neutral in this regard. The Tory members might want to refute it, but these are the facts.

Conclusions from *Where's Home?* and *Where's Home? part 2*—they tell it so I might as well just read it.

"Every part of the province is affected by the deteriorating situation for tenants.

"It is not just Toronto, or the big cities, where the affordable housing situation for tenants has deteriorated.

"Data from 21 Ontario municipalities"—you remember they studied eight cities before, and now they did the other cities and municipalities—"covering the last 10 years demonstrates that hundreds of thousands of Ontario tenants are suffering, and prospects are likely to worsen unless the provincial and federal governments act.

"Rents are increasing faster than the rate of inflation in almost all of the 21 municipalities, and with the partial decontrol of rents by the provincial government in 1998, rent increases may accelerate at an even faster rate.

"Muskoka, North Bay, Owen Sound, Barrie and Sudbury have some of the highest rates of rent increases, in company with Toronto.

"Many municipalities have serious rental housing shortages, with declining vacancy rates.

"Among those with shortages, Barrie, Guelph, Kitchener-Waterloo, Durham, Peel and Toronto have extremely low vacancy rates.

"Affordability problems for tenants are severe, and getting worse everywhere.

"Almost half of all Ontario tenants cannot afford their rents"—half of them, 3.3 million tenants, have an affordability problem—"and the rate of tenants with affordability problems has jumped in every one of the 21 municipalities based on the last census taken in 1996.

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"Places such as Peterborough, Kingston, Sudbury, North Bay, Owen Sound, Sarnia and Muskoka have among the highest rates of tenants paying 30% or more of their household income on rent.

"Almost one in four tenants in Ontario"—that is, a little more than 300,000 households—"is considered to be at potential risk of homelessness because they are

paying a staggering 50% or more of their combined household incomes on rent." That is staggering.

"Peterborough and Kingston exceed even Toronto's rate of tenants at risk of homelessness.

"The trend line in Ontario for tenants with affordability problems has increased relentlessly over the last four census periods, with the most dramatic jump found in the 1996 census.

"The 1996 census recorded a decline in Ontario rent incomes of 4% from the 1991 report.

"The market is not responding to needs; almost no new rental housing is being built.

"In 1997 and 1998, only 2% of all housing starts in Ontario were for rental housing." That's all.

"The average proportion of rental housing starts in Ontario in the first half of the decade was 27%.

"With the federal government's cancellation of funding for new assisted housing in 1993, and a similar cancellation by Ontario"—meaning them—"in 1995, no new assisted housing has been built in the province for several years.

"The lack of new rental housing construction will create even more serious shortages (with accompanying increases in rents) in the near future.

"A Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp report projects a need of 80,000 new rental units in Ontario over the 1996-2001 period, during which time only 6,000 rental units are likely to be built." So far, only about 3,000 units have been built.

With a projected need of 80,000 new rental units from 1996 to 2001, you can see the—I have a graph here. I'm not sure the camera will be able to catch it, but this is the projected housing need—80,000 by the year 2001. Only 3,000 units have so far been built, with a projected housing construction of 6,000 units, more or less, by 2001. The need is reported to be 80,000 units. This is a report done by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp.

Ms Martel: M. Leach was wrong.

Mr Marchese: M. Leach was dead wrong, poor fellow. God bless, wherever he is; a board member of Lavalin, I'm sure he's doing okay.

"Making a bad situation worse is the growing trend to demolition of existing rental housing or its conversion to condominiums; this is expected to accelerate with the termination by Ontario in 1998 of legislation which gave municipalities powers to protect rental housing.

"The Ontario and federal governments must act now," they say, "and provide new funding programs.

"The attempts made by both senior levels of government earlier in the 1990s to walk away from their responsibility for funding affordable housing have seriously added to the growing problems for Ontario tenants.

"Significant new funding for affordable housing must be made a priority by both Queen's Park and Ottawa, recognizing that municipalities cannot possibly make a serious dent in the need for affordable housing alone.

"There is a clear role for the province in creating new affordable housing, as well as looking to their policies

and legislation which are currently making the situation worse for tenants in existing rental housing.

"Federal and provincial homeless initiatives must be accompanied by broader affordable housing action if they are to have a lasting impact."

I read that for the record as a way of saying we have a national housing disaster on our hands, and it will not do to have glib responses from Tories that make it appear that they have solved the problem or are solving it, and it will not do for members like the member for Carleton-Gloucester to simply say, "The old system was dysfunctional and we're just fixing it." It will not do.

It will not do to simply say the culprit was maximum rents. It will not do. You can hide behind it. I know that is one of the things you want to try to pin on other governments as the causal connection to our housing problem, but you simply won't get away with it. You will look foolish. In the minds of those who are intelligent social activists and suffering the problem of housing, you will not look very intelligent in your responses.

So I urge government members to try to be a little more sensitive and responsive to the need. By merely attacking other governments, you are not escaping your social obligation. You will be made accountable; it's just a question of time.

This housing shortage affects millions of people, threatens 50% of the population, 3.3 million who are having an affordability problem and who eventually will leave those places or be forced out. They will cause a social problem that you as government—as non-government government—may have to respond to soon or later. Reminding you that projects take anywhere from three to six years to build, even if you start now you will not even be able to make a dent in the housing disaster we have on our hands.

This report I read to you calls for an urgent need for you as a government to respond, and they're calling upon the federal Liberal government to respond.

I am saddened by the fact that M. Martin, the federal Finance Minister, co-authored a report in 1991 with a colleague of his, and they talked about having a national housing strategy, a national housing policy. By 1993, when they got elected, they threw that report out the window. And not only that; they have devolved housing responsibilities to the provinces and territories.

You, the federal government, cannot abandon tenants, homeless people, people who have an affordability problem and people who are looking for decent, affordable housing. You, the federal Liberal government, cannot abandon those social needs. You cannot on one hand say, "We care, we have a heart," and on the other hand do nothing. You cannot. It is illegitimate for you to have a \$21-billion surplus and not put one cent into housing. You cannot.

So I urge my opposition colleagues in the Liberal Party to urge their federal members to get the federal government to do something, to release some dollars for housing. It's the least you can do.

We in the opposition are all talking about housing. We all recognize we need it. But you, more than I, have more power to influence federal Liberals. So if you are lobbying them, please show it. If you are writing them to urge them to do something on the housing front, please show us so we know that you're doing something. But it will not do to simply say, "We at the provincial level care, and they are at the federal level. We have no responsibility in that regard." You're independent members, yes. You are here as independent Liberal members. I urge you to support the call for taking responsibility for homelessness and taking responsibility for our housing shortage in order to be able to deal with this disaster across Ontario and across Canada. That's my urgent appeal to them.

1730

With respect to the other matters that have been raised about tenants, we dealt with that yesterday. I asked a question. I asked the Premier, who then turned it over to his housing minister, to deal with some of the problems that were raised by the Centre for Equality Rights in Accommodation.

Two problems were highlighted. The eviction forms are often unclear, often are not delivered to the tenant and sometimes are downright fraudulent, was the point that I made. If they're not delivered by the landlord and even if they are delivered, it's still a problem, because there's confusion. Because of linguistic differences or linguistic difficulties, some people do not understand that they're about to be evicted. Once served with a notice, you've got five days to respond. If you do not respond, you're out.

The urgent appeal I made to the Premier, because it is within his control, was to instruct the tribunal to make sure they send the notice out to the tenants. Don't leave that responsibility to the landlords. Some landlords are good folk, no doubt, but many landlords are not. What we want to deal with is a matter of having a landlord who's not as decent as we would like and therefore urging the tribunal to send that notice of eviction with some clarity so people can defend themselves. That was one request that I had made.

The other request was that five days of appeal notice is completely inadequate. The Centre for Equality Rights in Accommodation said it should be 14 days, and we agree. They are reasonable requests. I can't for the life of me understand why this government simply cannot, through the common sense that they claim to have, simply respond to common sense suggestions made by people who are working with those who are very vulnerable.

I urge this government to be a little more sensitive, to have some foresight to the disaster we have at the moment and the disaster we are about to face. I urge my provincial Liberal opposition colleagues to urge their federal Liberal members that action needs to be taken now. If they don't act now, if the federal government doesn't release money, this provincial government will simply shirk from their responsibility.

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): There is a crisis in supportive housing that this government must address. Young people with handicaps are being sentenced to a life of wasted opportunities by a government too obsessed with ridding the streets of squeegee kids to take responsibility for disabled kids.

To illustrate the seriousness of this problem, I'm going to speak to you about the case of Danielle Harder, a young woman with cerebral palsy. Dani has lived in the Bloorview McMillan Centre for most of her life. She lacks control of her arms and legs, is non-verbal and requires attendant care on a 24-hour basis. Dani is bright, insightful and very lively. Dani enjoys a rich social life and undertakes volunteer work.

At 25, Dani is too old to remain at the youth-oriented Bloorview. For the past nine years, Ms Harder and her family have been attempting to secure a home for her. More than 30 different possible homes have been explored. Most have waiting lists as long as your arm. The others have turned her away because she requires more care than they can provide. The government's senseless solution to the lack of space is to find a place for Dani in a seniors' chronic care facility.

If Dani were placed in such a facility, her life would be compromised. This is a vibrant, lovely young woman with her entire life ahead of her. However, her roommates would be seniors requiring chronic care. Rather than spending the next 50 years in a seniors' home, Dani should live in an apartment-style group home with her peers.

This type of arrangement would not only serve Dani better, it would save money within the first year. A cost analysis has shown that a new facility can be developed at a net saving when compared to the government's plan of placing Dani in a chronic care facility.

The problem is housing. With the government abdicating its responsibility for housing, it's almost impossible for Dani's group, Partners for Meaningful Living, to raise the money required to purchase and retrofit an appropriate facility. All they need is a crumb of capital funding to get this project off the ground.

Instead, the government of Ontario has ignored Dani Harder for nine years. Her issue was first raised in 1990, and through five years of NDP rule and four years of Conservative rule nothing has been done. My office knows of 10 instances like this in Toronto alone and there are likely hundreds more, across this province, individuals locked into retirement facilities.

Each minister who could take responsibility is ducking for cover. The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care passes the buck to the Minister of Consumer and Social Relations, who passes the buck to housing, who passes the buck to health and long-term care. Even the Premier has gotten into the passing-the-buck game.

Will one current minister accept responsibility for this issue and work for Dani's group to develop new facilities for severely disabled young people to live in? Will one minister accept the responsibility for supportive housing and stop the duplication of bureaucracy that is sucking

valuable resources out of the system? Will one minister at least answer the letters from Dani's mother, Karen, that were forwarded to them by the Premier?

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): It is with some regret that I join this debate today put forward on a very important matter. I want to thank first my colleague from Don Valley East for his ardent advocacy for tenants. I think he shares my incredulity that the government today, when given an opportunity to come to terms with its abandonment of tenants, with its broken election promise to tenants in the issue of maximum rents, chose instead to run a comic opera around some other kind of commentary altogether than to deal with the people—some of whom are here in the gallery today—whose lives have been affected.

Two days ago we had a little play put on by the member from Scarborough Southwest, talking about years and years ago. Two days ago, under the term of this government, with these caucus members who are glued to their seats, not doing anything on behalf of their own tenants, the people living in West Lodge apartments had increases applied on an average of 38%.

What that means, done by this Conservative government, is that Sukrani Looknauth had her rent increased from \$494 to \$683, leaving her \$146 for everything else. What fair-minded people out there might ask is, "What does Sukrani or any of those 720 families get in return?" The answer is absolutely nothing, and in fact worse.

Under the Tory-arranged rules there is no longer protection, as there was before June 1998, that if a building was in disrepair, you couldn't grab an increase in rent, let alone one of 38% or the maximum that we're seeing here, 50%, but you can now. You can under these Tories. You can under the people who have become the party of greed, the party that can't stand up for little people but instead has to side with big business each and every time, even with something as egregious as a 38% increase that leaves somebody \$140 to live on. That is the direct result of regulations and laws put in force by this government.

I think people across the province who are fair-minded are shocked to understand that this is a government that will stand idly by to see 720 families, 2,000 people, put in a state of absolute misery as a result of this government's actions.

The landlords in those buildings are the only people who stand to benefit because 82% of these tenants are forced to deal with a lack of elevator service—

Interjection.

Mr Kennedy: —76%, which the member opposite seems to find a bit amusing, have cockroaches in their apartments; 73% have mice in their apartments, and for that privilege of mice, of cockroaches—

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey): No one believes you.

Mr Kennedy: We hear a member opposite making noise: the member from Bruce-Grey perhaps talking about his own subsidized apartment which is immune to these problems. Each member in this House who has a

subsidized apartment, and the majority of the members opposite have subsidized apartments paid for by the state—will they actually deal with the issue at hand? They won't.

1740

I want to tell you, it's very simple. The people at Triller Avenue, the courageous people at West Lodge represented here by Anna Thacker, who's the head of the tenants' association, see the behaviour of this House. They see these members who will be asked to make a recorded vote. We see the people who will stand up for a legal stickup, for gouging of people, who will not stand up and use their legal ability to act to defend these people, who will not stand up for these people because they simply have lost touch with the needs of average people, hard-working people, people who are working for below minimum wage, people with disabilities, people whose rent has gone up as much as \$284 and yet 45% of them have sinks that don't work and there are messes in the hallways. The front doors of a complex with 720 families in it, that your government approves a 38% increase for, aren't even locked.

The members sit in their places in this House and claim to be legislators in the public interest, and they can't bend this much. They can't accommodate getting rid of the maximum rent that is ruining people's lives.

I want to commend my colleague, because the members opposite for some reason can't do their duty and he's helping this House come to terms with this problem.

Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain): In speaking to this motion, I want to focus on a particular aspect of the affordable housing issue that is of special concern to me, that of student housing.

In the recent throne speech, this government talked about real people. I want to talk about real people too, the real people who represent our best investment and hope for a prosperous future in this province, the real people who are entering colleges and universities and facing unacceptable challenges because of this government's continuous attack on affordable housing and tenants, its elimination of rent controls through the Tenant Protection Act, an ironic title if I ever heard one.

Let me tell you about real people, then, and outline for the members some of the experiences they're enduring as they deal with the reality of this government's policies.

Kathy: She had all the stress of a regular student going away for the first time. In her own words, she says:

"I had all that stress ... plus some more. What I didn't have was a destination. After months of searching, I didn't have a home to go to. Neither did the three others who were coming with me to Toronto."

"Leaving London, Ontario, and the others behind, I packed a suitcase and started my journey of jumping around from friends' to friends' to strangers' places. At the same time, I began school."

"My friends and I started searching for a house in late July. There were only a few nice houses for reasonable prices.... Being a student didn't give me an advantage

over those families and professionals who had also applied.

"So here I was in an uncomfortable situation of having to stay at others' places, inconveniencing them. I slept on living room couches and lived out of suitcases."

"Also, when I had to get into these places"—such as residences—"I had to drag people downstairs to sign me in...."

"All of the local hostels were full.... I was thankful to those who took me in. What did other students who didn't have places to stay do?"

"After lugging my suitcase around from five different places, we finally moved into our own place on September 27...."

"I am now ready to start school. It's too bad I had four weeks of reading to catch up on while unpacking."

Tyler, another student, "a first-year student who drives two hours each way to get to school, never thought he would have a problem getting into residence at Ryerson."

"He was wrong."

"The applied computer science student from Whitby was looking forward to experiencing residence life when he applied" to residence "in December."

"Instead ... he was ranked between 61st and 111th on a waiting list for Ryerson ... residences."

"Now living at home, he has to leave at 5:45 am to make an 8 am class. He doesn't get home until 7 pm and is in bed by 9 so he can get up early enough to start the process again."

"Social life? Forget it."

"He's not expecting to be accepted into residence any time soon.... He's one of more than 200 students who were denied a spot"—first-year students.

As well, a student from Sault Ste Marie was 200th on a list and is now living in a co-op housing residence and had to pay nearly \$400 to be bumped to the top of its 300-person waiting list. "Ryerson's residence shortage is part of a larger crisis in affordable housing in Toronto brought on by the Ontario government."

Lest the government think that these examples are unique to Toronto, let me assure you that these stresses and hardships facing these young people are common across the province.

Let me share one last case, and that is of a Waterloo student who was living away from home for the first time and could not find a place in residence. She has to travel on two buses to go to the University of Waterloo every day. Her parents are worried. "Our goal is to find accommodation for our daughter," her father said. However, the local vacancy rate is less than 1.5%.

The bottom line is that this government preaches about the value of real people out of one side of its mouth and promises a quality post-secondary experience, then allows, through indifference, our youth to experience not quality but a nightmare as they begin their college or university life.

I strongly support this motion and urge all members to do so.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): I'm pleased to join the debate and congratulate my colleague from Don Valley East for bringing forward a very reasonable, thoughtful resolution here that clearly speaks to the problems that we're having in regard to tenants and affordability in this province. I know my colleague from Don Valley East has always been a strong advocate of tenants in his own riding and across this province, and this resolution fits in with that clearly.

There's a clear difference between that side of the House and this side of the House. That side of the House believes that the issue of rent controls of rental units is in the interests of the developers. Today, we clearly saw where your priorities are. Your priorities are with the developers in this province.

On this side of the House, in the Liberal caucus, we believe very much that as legislators our job and responsibility is to protect tenants. Certainly what you have done with your legislation—we're starting to see the horror stories. We heard my colleagues today talk about seniors, students and low-income tenants who have been trapped in their apartments, who now are in a situation where they no longer can afford decent, reasonable, clean rental accommodation.

This legislation you've brought in has not worked. It has continued to enrich the pockets of developers at the expense of average, hard-working, low-income, disabled, poor and senior Ontarians. Every sector has been affected by your changes.

In my own riding of Hamilton East, Mr Speaker, where one out of every three residents is a tenant, we have seen the impact. I've seen senior citizens who are afraid to move out of conditions that have deteriorated because they're afraid of what they're going to have to move into as a result of your policy that is there to protect your friends.

We have seen disabled individuals on fixed incomes who live in conditions that they should not be living in, but they don't dare look for something else because as soon as they try to find another apartment unit we know what's going to happen. They are going to be simply held for ransom by the owner and be charged whatever the owner wants to charge whether these folks can afford it or not.

As it affects the seniors, this has become a Tory version of elder abuse. Really, that's what you're inflicting on senior citizens across this province. You're making tenant senior citizens prisoners in their own homes. What you're doing, very clearly, in order to protect your rich and powerful friends, is screwing most average Ontarians who use rental accommodation and who should be protected by government, not shafted by government.

I ask the members across the floor to take off their blinders for a second, put away the party ideology for a second and think of the tenants in your riding who are affected by this legislation.

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke North): Point of order. I have a question for the Speaker. The member

opposite used a term which I would consider unparliamentary: the word "screwing."

The Acting Speaker: That's not a point of order. Continue.

Mr Agostino: They were screwed, referring to how this government has treated senior citizens across this province. I stand by that comment and I would ask these members across the floor—I understand my colleagues get rattled, because maybe you're feeling guilty about how this affects senior citizens. Maybe there's a touch of conscience here, how this is affecting vulnerable people. Probably not, because you have brought in this harmful, cruel policy of tenant gouging that is going to impact, and has impacted, every single tenant. It doesn't impact your rich friends who own condos but it impacts average Ontarians.

I say to this government, take off your blinders and think of the people in your riding who are affected. Do the right thing tonight. Vote in favour of the resolution, which will go a way towards dealing with this problem, towards convincing the Premier and your government that what you are doing to senior citizens, to disabled, to people who are vulnerable in this province, is immoral and is wrong.

1750

Mr Kennedy: Mr Speaker, I rise on a point of order. In the context of my remarks we had a number of the Tory members sitting laughing opposite, and one of them, the member for Bruce-Grey, challenged and said that he did not believe the fact that somebody had received an increase of \$189. That woman was sitting in the audience. She has sent a copy of her increase where she has had to pull \$189 out of her pocket because of you—

The Acting Speaker: That's not a point of order.

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): On the same point of order: I was sitting beside the member for Bruce-Grey throughout the time that you were indicating he made certain statements. He did not say that. He said nothing of the sort. I would ask you to withdraw a completely inaccurate statement.

The Acting Speaker: I ruled that was not a point of order so we will not continue further debate on this issue.

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of the Environment, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): Mr Speaker, on a point of order: Earlier today the honourable member for Eglinton-Lawrence asked me a question and I did want to correct the record because I've done some further research about this issue. I wanted to make sure that I was completely clear and factual. The contact with whom I had a conversation, who I understand was representing Jay-M Holdings, was not Mr Diamond. I apologize to the honourable member. My memory was faulty. It's a gentleman by the name of Mr Duffy, who is a planning consultant. So at no time have I spoken to Mr Diamond.

The Acting Speaker: Mr Caplan has moved opposition day motion number 1. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members; this will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1753 to 1803.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour will rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Agostino, Dominic	Colle, Mike	Marchese, Rosario
Bartolucci, Rick	Crozier, Bruce	Martel, Shelley
Bisson, Gilles	Di Cocco, Caroline	McLeod, Lyn
Bountrogianni, Marie	Dombrowsky, Leona	Patten, Richard
Boyer, Claudette	Duncan, Dwight	Peters, Steve
Bradley, James J.	Gerretsen, John	Ramsay, David
Brown, Michael A.	Gravelle, Michael	Ruprecht, Tony
Bryant, Michael	Kennedy, Gerard	Sergio, Mario
Caplan, David	Kwinter, Monte	Smitherman, George
Christopherson, David	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed will rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Hastings, John	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Baird, John R.	Hodgson, Chris	Runciman, Robert W.
Barrett, Toby	Jackson, Cameron	Sampson, Rob
Chudleigh, Ted	Johns, Helen	Skarica, Toni
Clark, Brad	Johnson, Bert	Snobelen, John
Clement, Tony	Kells, Morley	Spina, Joseph
Coburn, Brian	Klees, Frank	Sterling, Norman W.
Cunningham, Dianne	Marland, Margaret	Stockwell, Chris
DeFaria, Carl	Martinuk, Gerry	Tilson, David
Dunlop, Garfield	Maves, Bart	Tsubouchi, David H.
Ecker, Janet	Mazzilli, Frank	Turnbull, David
Eves, Ernie L.	Molinari, Tina R.	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Flaherty, Jim	Munro, Julia	Wilson, Jim
Galt, Doug	Murdoch, Bill	Witmer, Elizabeth
Gill, Raminder	Newman, Dan	Wood, Bob
Hardeman, Ernie	O'Toole, John	Young, David

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 29; the nays are 48.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

It being past 6 of the clock, this House will adjourn until 10 of the clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1805.

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